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Phantom of the cornfield...p.11

The donkeys of Darfur.....p.3

61st year of publication

Doctors urge changes in the Canadian medicare system to reduce wait times

Harry der Nederlanden

At its recent annual convention, the Canadian medical Association, an association of 60,000 doctors across Canada, tried to put some new fire in the discussion of the ailing medicare system.

According to the CMA one out of five Ontarians are now without a family doctor. Less than ten percent of doctors were taking new patients last year. That is not about to get better as the baby boomer generation ages and more doctors reach retirement age. The CMA hopes to bring back some of the 10,000 Canadian-trained doctors now practicing in the U.S.

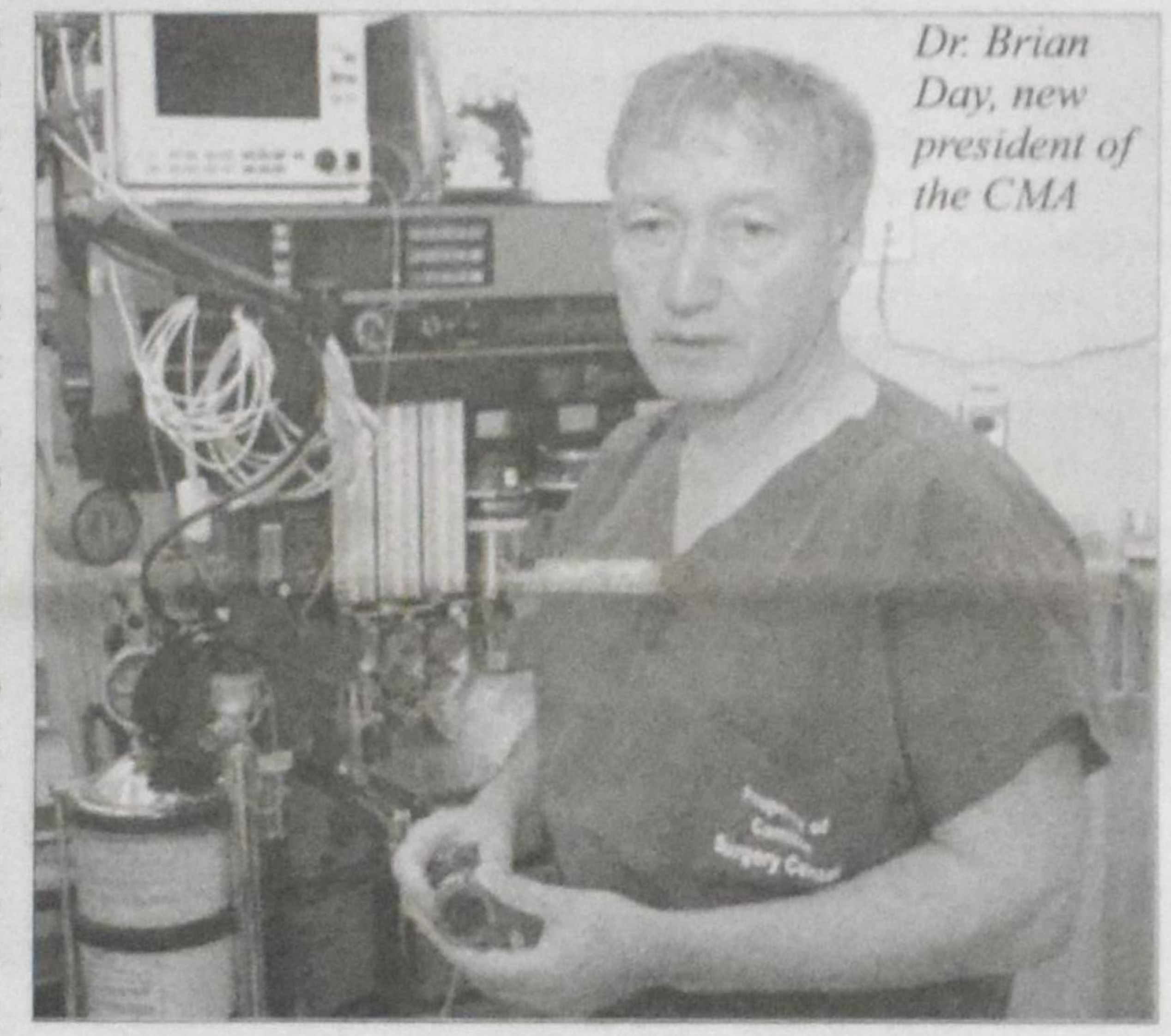
In a policy statement entitled *Medicare Plus* that claims to be looking for ways to save and improve medicare the association presented suggestions for a new vision for medicare. Provincial governments, it suggests, should contract out public health services to the private sector and pay for patients to get care elsewhere if the waiting time is too long where they live.

Since the government has not always been able to provide timely access, Canadians should be able to purchase private medical insurance to pay for services they cannot get in time in the public system.

Recall that in 2005 the Supreme Court ruled that the government cannot maintain a monopoly on healthcare if it isn't able to provide care in time. If the system cannot do the job, the court said, it is wrong to forbid people from getting help elsewhere using their own resources.

The report also urged the government to invest more in the training and hiring of more doctors, nurses and clinicians.

The CMA said it continues to support a system in which access is on the basis of need, not ability to pay, but if the present system doesn't deliver, other options should be considered. However, it envisions a day when the private sector is a widely-accepted part of the health care system. It predicted: "We may expect to see a continued trend toward the delivery of diagnostic, medical and surgical procedures in specialized facilities that are privately owned and operated."



Dr. Brian Day, new president of the CMA

Criticism was, of course, swift, with some charging that the doctors are not thinking of what's good for the patients but what's good for them. And there were once again dire warnings that any introduction of privatization into the system means the end of Canadian medicare and the eventual Americanization of healthcare in this country.

The outgoing president of the CMA, Dr. Colin McMillan, expressed dismay at how emotionally charged any discussion of change remains in Canada. He urged physicians to stand up for their patients by asking tough questions.

John Carpay of the Canadian Constitution Foundation supported the CMA. He said that most Canadians feel they should have the right to use their own money to access care when the public system falters.

At the annual convention of the CMA held in late August, the new president, Dr. Brian Day, repeated

See **Doctors** *on page 3*

Montebello, the three amigos, jelly beans and agents provacateur

Harry der Nederlanden

According to one account, the meeting of the three North American heads of state at the log cabin resort in Montebello, Quebec was about jelly beans. That's right – those candies that stick to your teeth. Canada wants them labeled one way, and the U.S, another, and this causes huge headaches for jellybeaners.

By another account, described in lurid detail on a number of websites, the "three amigos", in collusion with big business, were planning a way to virtually erase the borders between the three countries to turn the entire continent into one giant free market for the multinationals to exploit and ravage. Blueprints for a vast artery running north and south across the continent that include a multilane superhighway as well as gas and oil pipelines have already been drawn up. And this humungous merger is going to be implemented in secret, behind the backs of the voters in the three countries.

That would be quite a feat for three weak heads of state to carry off. Harper leads a minority government. Bush, with the lowest popularity rating of any president in recent history, is often referred to as a lame duck. And Mexican President Felipe Calderon isn't exactly at the height of popularity at home either.

This was the third in a series of three meetings between the three heads of state. The first was held in 2005, when Paul Martin was P.M. and Vincente Fox was president in Mexico.

See **Montebello** *on page 2*

News

Chavez keeps using his petrodollars to extend his Bolivarian Revolution

Harry der Nederlanden

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez seems determined to keep himself in the international spotlight. He took further drastic steps to enhance his power within his own country and also bold steps to extend his influence – his Bolivarian Revolution – across the rest of Latin America.

In his latest series of moves, he proposed changes to the constitution that will grant him greater powers to expropriate the assets of private corporations more easily. The government should not have to wait for a court ruling that such an expropriation is legal before it can seize the company's assets, argued Chavez. He also wants to eliminate the autonomy of Venezuela's national bank to get easier access to the petrodollars.

Chavez is taking full advantage of the fact that several opposition parties boycotted the last election so that he now rules with virtually no opposition. To further mute his critics, he recently refused to renew the license of the largest television station in the country that was aligned with the opposition.

Chavez makes no secret of the fact that he is engineering a full-scale transformation of the country on socialist principles, though with unique "Bolivarian" variations. By extending cheap government credit and easy repayment schedules, for example, he established some 140,000 cooperatives across the country. These were supposed to empower the poorest segments of Venezuelan society to set up their own enterprises in small groups (somewhat like the microcredit model). The government invested tens of millions of dollars into the visionary scheme. But a couple of years later only 48,000 of the cooperatives survived. In most cases, it seems, the coop members simply pocketed the money and went their separate ways.

Similarly, a scheme that established special low-priced stores for the poor was not sufficiently well thought out and created economic havoc for store owners. Chavez tried to solve the problems he created by simply bullying the store owners and branding them as exploiters of the poor.

A laudable program to provide education to millions of illiterate Venezuelans was more successful. It relied on videocassettes to extend basic education to over one million Venezuelans to whom such education has not been available. Grandiose claims, however, were made that the program had eliminated illiteracy in the country. In fact, however, some learned to do little more than to write their names.

In an effort to elevate the success of the program, the Chavez government pressured the regular schools and universities to recognize the degrees earned under the videocassette program as equivalent to theirs. The major universities, however, have refused to do so.

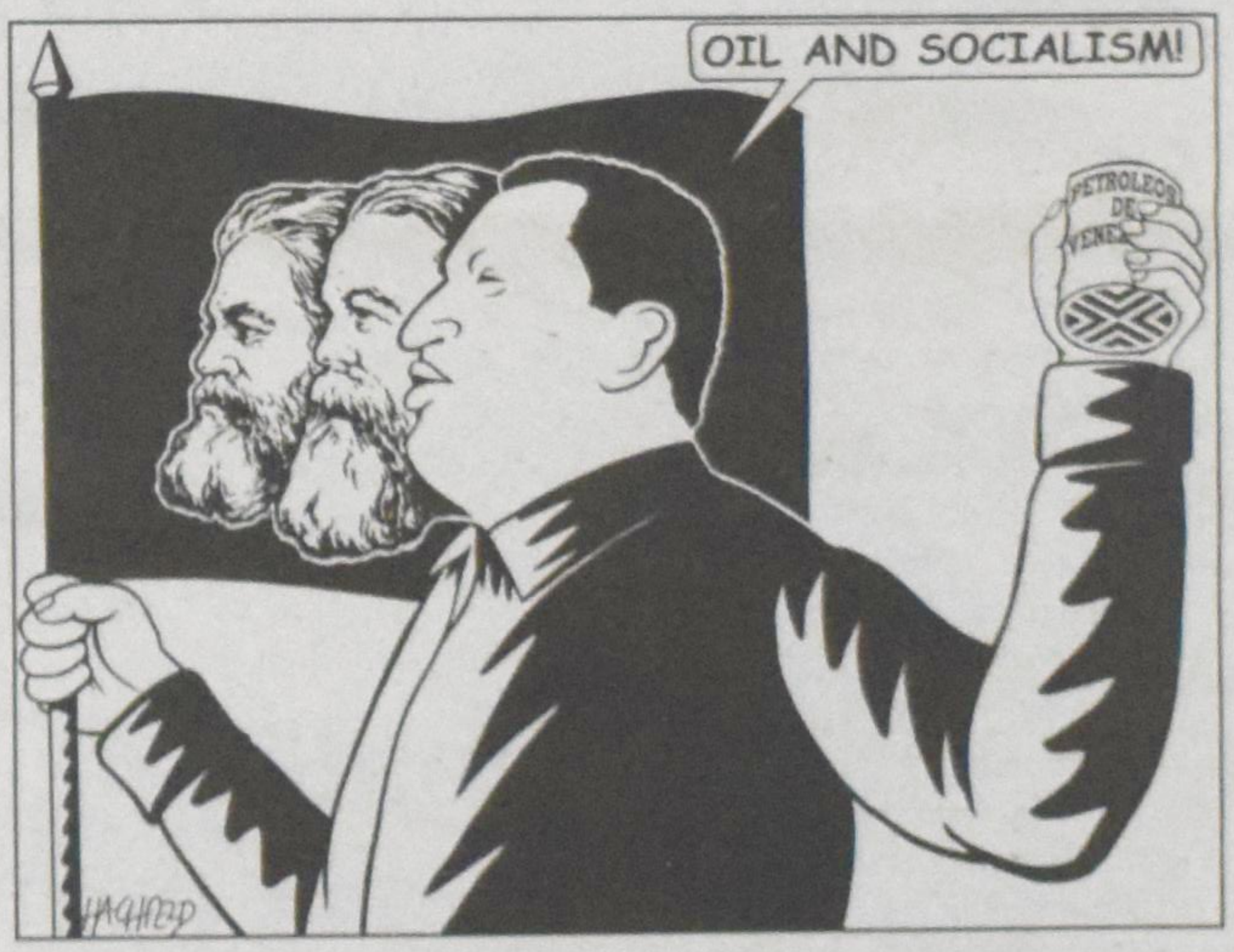
Unfazed by the dubious success of many of his projects at home, Chavez has begun tossing oil money around the international scene as if he has a bottomless purse. He has extended financial aid, financing and energy funding to other countries on an unprecedented scale. While U.S. aid in Latin America is typically low-profile and via other institutions, Chavez's aid is done with fanfare and it is usually very direct. And it has done much good.

In Bolivia, for example, Where President Evo Morales models himself after Chavez, about $20 million in aid went directly to mayors who supported Morales. When Bolivia experienced widespread flooding, the U.S. sent $1.5 million in aid in the form of supplies. Chavez responded by pledging ten times that.

He helped Argentina pay off its debt to the International Monetary Fund by buying up $5.1 billion in Argentinian bonds. But many times the aid given is very personal and direct. When a factory in Argentina went bankrupt, the workers formed a cooperative and wrote to Chavez. He subsidized them and they were able to get the factory up and running again, so that several hundred Argentinians were able to go back to work.

It's this personal touch that has won Chavez such a following, but it's also his dark shadow, for he seems determined to make all roads lead to him personally. While the country certainly needed drastic reform to bring the poor into the economy, and while Chavez may have the noblest of intentions, he has been undermining the democratic institutions of the country, fragile to begin with.

Still, however flawed Chavez's programs may be, a much, much larger share of the country's oil revenues are gong to help the poor. In the 90s only about one percent of the oil profits went to Venezuela. Chavez now takes a hefty 33 percent. That gives him a great deal of wealth to toss around like a generous benefactor. The question is: does it help the recipients to greater independence or do they become dependent on endless hand-outs? Although Venezuela is sitting on a huge pool of oil, it is not inexhaustible.



Montebello *continued from page 1*

Their purpose is to strengthen the trilateral relationship among three countries that constitute the largest trading bloc in the world. So the talks have been primarily about facilitating the flow of trade between countries while enhancing border security.

But immigration issues and job losses to Mexico make some Americans jittery about freer borders. In Canada nationalists fear almost any closer cooperation with the U.S. as a threat to Canadian autonomy and identity. Mexicans are wary of promises of closer ties with the U.S. while that country is putting the squeeze on Mexican immigrant and erecting walls.

"We've now had more than a decade of implementation of NAFTA, and there's a rising sense of negatives associated with that – in particular a sense of loss of local control to some overarching superentity – even as the promises of NAFTA uplifting everyone, creating jobs, and enhancing the rate of development do not seem to have been kept," says Miguel Tinker-Salas, an expert in Western Hemisphere relations at Pomona College in Claremont, Calif. "In all three countries, people feel this super-government they have no say in is having a growing influence over their lives."(Quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor*)

In Canada anti-American activists are circulating conspiracy theories. Behind the backs of their respective peoples, the three heads of states are allegedly laying the groundwork for a customs union akin to the one that launched the European Union. It would lead to a loss of Canadian control of their own economy, their media, their healthcare system, our own currency, and we would all become Americanized. That's a lot to be achieved in secret.

What brought jellybeans into the headlines was the issue of standardization. Diffferent standards among the three countries cause big slowdowns at the border. Canadian jellybeans, for example, do not pass inspection for U.S. consumption, not because of their ingredients but because of different standards of labeling. Either way, they still stick to your teeth.

It's to be hoped that more came out of the meetings than another round of investigations of the police. The follow-up stories after the big Montebello summit were about police officers masquerading at protestors and allegedly acting as agents provacateur inciting them to acts of violence. No doubt the opposition will milk that for all it's worth.

The donkeys of Darfur

Scott Baldauf

In Darfur, donkeys are a lifeline. In the semi-desert regions of Darfur and Eastern Chad, a donkey is not just a beast of burden. It is a living pickup truck, carrying water or firewood.

Iriba, Chad

When Sudanese government bombs fell on his town of Kornoya in the troubled region of Darfur four years ago, Abdu Mohammad Phile found something to be grateful for: None of his three wives or 20 children had been killed, and he had three donkeys to carry them all out to safety.

The journey took three weeks, through a merciless landscape of scrubby trees and sand, but everyone in his family made it alive.

"If I didn't have donkeys, we couldn't have made it here with my children," says the owner of a trucking business in Kornoya, who now lives in a refugee camp just across the Sudanese border in neighboring Chad. "I lost everything I had in Darfur, all my possessions. We put the children on the donkeys and we carried the food and the water ourselves and walked."

In the rugged semi-desert regions of Darfur and Eastern Chad, a donkey is not just a beast of burden. It is a pickup truck, carrying water or firewood. It is a source of wealth and pride. It can be part of a dowry at the wedding of a daughter. But in times of conflict, such as the four-year-long civil war in the Darfur region, and now as local conflicts reach a war-footing in Chad itself, possession of a donkey can be the difference between survival and death.

After four years, the stories of destruction inside Sudan's Darfur region have become familiar ones, told with numbing regularity to visiting journalists. Plastic and canvas tents have by now been replaced by familiar round mud huts with conical thatched roofs made of grass, a sign of resignation to the bitter status quo. But while families still rely almost entirely on international food assistance, since they are mostly forbidden from working in the local Chadian economy, the one possession many refugees can still call their own are their animals, and especially their donkeys.

Kenyans consecrate American bishops

WANGUI KANINA NAIROBI – Benjamin Nzimbi, the Anglican Archbishop of Kenya, consecrated two conservative American priests as bishops to lead U.S. congregations that have split from the U.S. Episcopal Church over its stand on homosexuality.

William Atwood and William Murdoch are among a growing number of conservative U.S. clerics pledging allegiance to African bishops who take a tough line against homosexuality.

"The gospel is clear on which relationships correspond to God's order of life ... homosexual practice violates the order of life given by God in the Holy Scripture," said Drexel Gomez, Archbishopof the West Indies, in a sermon at Nairobi's All Saints Cathedral attended by hundreds of worshippers.

Bishops Atwood and Murdoch will be in charge of 30 congregations in the United States that have asked for leadership from Kenya.

At the service, where traditional Anglican hymns were sung to African beats, the new bishops vowed to "serve the international interests of the Anglican Church of Kenya, to serve clergy and congregations in North America under the Kenyan jurisdiction."

The five-hour service was attended by 10 primates from the "Global South," made up of churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America that support traditional Anglicanism.

"Today's ceremony is not about making a political statement. It is about the gospel of Jesus Christ and caring for people," Bishop Atwood said.

"There are 52 million Anglicans worldwide, and the fact that the leaders of 40 million of them are here shows that it is hardly a renegade act."

The U.S. Church has accused Africans of invading its territory by consecrating Americans. But conservative Africans say they only want to provide refuge for orthodox believers who are at odds with liberal views.

Doctors *continued from page 1*

the call for change. He wants to see market principles introduced into the financing of public hospitals. Instead of the government simply giving hospitals a block sum, he argued, hospitals should be funded according to the number of patients they treat. It is a method used in Europe, he said, to reward greater efficiency. Hospitals should have an incentive to treat patients more rapidly and to compete with one another.

Critics pointed out that if the supply of doctors and nurses remains the same, it is hard to see how allowing some to provide the same services privately will reduce waiting times in the public system. Moreover, if private insurers were to agree to pay more for the same services, wouldn't doctors be tempted to devote more time to those paying through private insurance and even to divert patients to the parallel private system? The CMA proposal would only make sense, it seems, if private clinics succeeded in attracting substantial numbers of the doctors Canada has lost to the U.S.

Rewarding hospitals to push patients through the system more quickly also has its drawbacks. It leads to premature discharge of patients. And it doesn't take into account hospitals that by virtue of location must deal with patients that demand longer-terms care. Why should such hospitals be penalized?

Even the option of going elsewhere for treatment if your wait time is too long sounds better than it is. By the time you discover there's a bottleneck, you've probably already been waiting quite a while. Finding somewhere else to go and then getting on the waiting list there takes additional time. Depending on the kind of treatment you need, you may end up waiting almost as long as if you had stayed put.

Canada's medical system is faltering because we need a lot more doctors and nurses and because we are using the system more than before. No doubt there are ways to use the people and facilities we have more efficiently, but that has its limits. We must be dubious of any schemes that promise quick fixes, whether by the government or by market principles. Yet, the introduction of privately owned clinics that plug more diagnostic machinery into the system or the use of clinics that provide elective kinds of surgeries at some cost to the patient ought to be seriously considered.

If we take into our purview all things pertaining to healthcare – including drugs, dental care, chiropractic, alternative medicines, occupational therapies and so on – the present healthcare system is already a blend of public and private modalities.

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Editorial

From generation to generation....

Harry der Nederlanden

A baptism is designed to give rise to reflection and remembering as well as celebration. It is one of the two holy dramas that all Christian churches recognize as God-given. But when it's your own grandchild being baptized and you're looking on a bit light-headed from the chemotherapy, it has an especially powerful punch.

A baptism is a celebration of new life, not just for one particular family but for the whole family of God. Before our very eyes we see the promises of God being realized. At baptism we allude to the promises made to Abraham, to circumcision, to the covenant, to the great flood and to Pharaoh's army drowned in the Red Sea. But there's this lively, beautiful baby up there to gush over. It's all so here, so very natural, material, down-to-earth real. A new baby! A man and a woman fall in love, get married and now here – miraculously and not-so-miraculously – there's a baby. And we all rejoice with the parents.

And God wants to be in on the celebrations too. In the beginning God declared that this earthly, physical reality that he had made was good. And nothing shows forth this goodness more than when he brings new life into our midst. When a child is brought before the congregation to be baptized, we're all future-oriented. Feelings of hope spring up in us and we wish the best for the child and the family. In them we go on. It's a time for sentimentality, for hugs, for cooing at the new baby.

But as I sat in the pew, I thought about death. I've been marked for it by cancer, so I may be excused, I think. Yet, I wasn't being lugubrious or depressed. Although baptism is the very symbol of new life – and more – it is crowded about with images of death. We are reminded of the Noachic flood and the destruction of Pharaoh's army by water and above all of the death of Jesus Christ. The water cascading over the child's head isn't just a quicky wash; it is water as a destructive force, as the force that smashes dikes and dams and pulverizes house and sweeps people to their death.

A baptism is a drowning. When you step back a bit, Christianity is an odd religion. Here the parents and the community gather around to welcome this new life, this sign of God's goodness and faithfulness. And God tells the pastor who stands there as his representative to drown the baby – figuratively, of course. Even though it's only a symbolic act, by rights we ought to be shocked, even a bit horrified. We're doing the same thing basically that Abraham did when he walked his son Isaac up the mountain to the place of sacrifice.

A brand new life, exceedingly precious, cradled at the baptismal font. In the pew the generation that this child is replacing join in to say Amen to this process. It's the most natural thing in the world: one generation comes, the older generation goes. If you've been reading Van Ruler's meditations on Ecclesiastes, you'll recall that the Preacher gets quite exercised about this cycle. All the work, memories, possessions, achievements of one generation that toiled hard under the sun to make something of themselves are lost or passed on to the next generation, possibly to be neglected or wasted. "Meaningless! Meaningless!" cries the Preacher. Everything goes down to destruction.

Baptism is covenant, and central to the covenant is this succession of generations. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and so on – all those begats leading to Bethlehem. But it's not a smooth road. It is beset with violence. The threats to God's covenant people don't come primarily from without either. The story of generations is ruptured repeatedly, constantly threatening to fly apart. Jealously, deception, violence, banishment, alienation, hatred, fratricide, tribalism.

Yet, this should be above all a story of harmony, continuity and unity of purpose. It should be a love story. But almost every conceivable evil the world has seen also tears at the fabric of the covenant line.

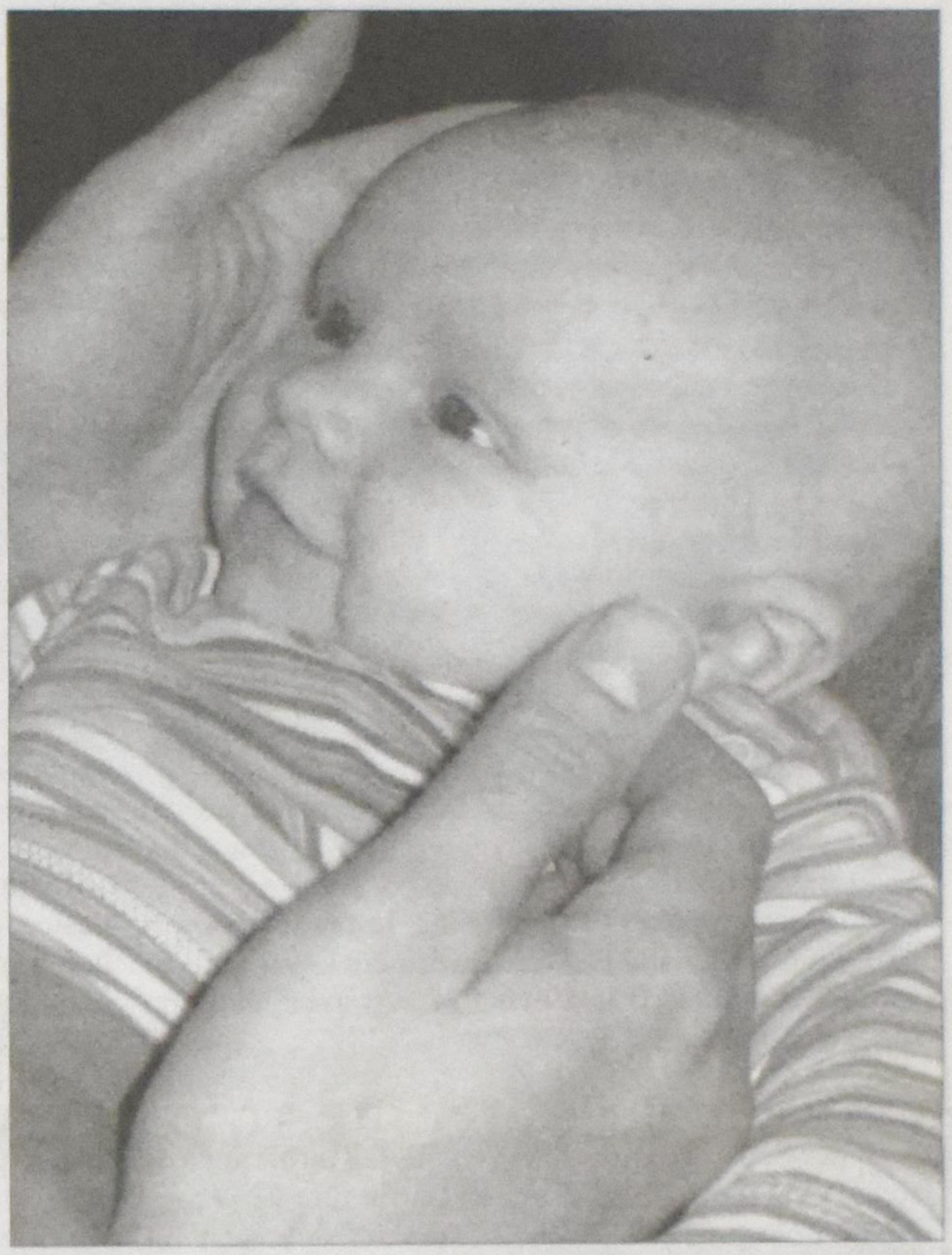
At baptism, we are reminded of this awful, violent history. Not to scare us. Not as an object lesson. But to address what destroys us and to deal with it. Our children are born into a violent world, and the relationship between generations is not free from that violence. It would destroy us like the flood.

But God transfigures this water – this destructive element – into a sign of renewal and resurrection. The waters are no longer the waters of chaos and judgment. They are life-giving waters that flow from the throne of God. The destructive force cannot ultimately snatch us from God's hands. So it no longer holds for us the terror of alienation from God, from one another and from this good creation.

As I witnessed my grandson's baptism, this time I couldn't help being jarred by the contrast between the natural and the spiritual, between violent nature, including human nature, and this spiritual, mystical ritual we call baptism. Reformed theology, however, stresses that since nature and history are called into being by God's breath and word, the natural is spiritual through and through. The natural is not a lower story and the spiritual is not a wax job that makes nature shiny and sparkly. Yet, there is still a tension in our experience between what stalks us as part of our fallen nature and part of our violence-prone culture and history. They continue to be stubborn realities. Sometimes we find it hard to discern the good from the evil in what we inherit and what we hand on to the next generation.

In the final analysis, we must surrender that task to God. In faith we see in the water trickling down on the baby's head God pouring himself out for us and on us. He laid down his life *for us*. With our Reformed stress on God's glory, we sometimes slur over that *for us*. But God is a God of particular people. Jesus came not to please himself, but he came for this baby. In him the water is no longer first of all a destructive force, a threat to our survival. In baptism that aspect becomes secondary; it is put behind us. Now the water is first of all life giving, and the seas and rivers, the fields and forests, the hills and valleys are our home.

Maxwell Kent Taylor will play not in a world of violence and terror; he will play in the fields of the Lord.



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Letters

Celebrating 25 years of God's faithfulness

The upcoming academic year will mark a milestone in the history of Redeemer University College – it was in September 1982 when Redeemer opened its doors to students for the first time. In that inaugural year, there were eight full-time faculty members and ninety-seven students, backed by a broad community of supporters who were committed to the creation of a Christian university in Ontario.

Beyond that community support, Redeemer was, and remains, dependent on God's rich provision. We understand that none of what Redeemer has grown to – 2700 alumni, 850 students, 45 full-time faculty and increasing recognition for academic excellence – would be possible without his blessings, which are evident in so many ways.

On **Saturday, September 29, 2007 at 3:00 p.m**. Redeemer will host a Celebration Service in which we will remember where we have come from, give thanks for where we now are, and look forward in anticipation to where God will bring us next. Friends and supporters are invited to join in celebrating a quarter-century of God's great faithfulness.

Redeemer University College is a Christian undergraduate university offering Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Science degrees. Its 850 students major in a variety of disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences and come to Redeemer from 9 Canadian provinces, 15 U.S. states and 10 other countries. Its 2700-plus alumni can be found working in a wide range of businesses, social service agencies, public institutions and a host of different ministries, both domestically and around the world.

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Accentuate positive contributions

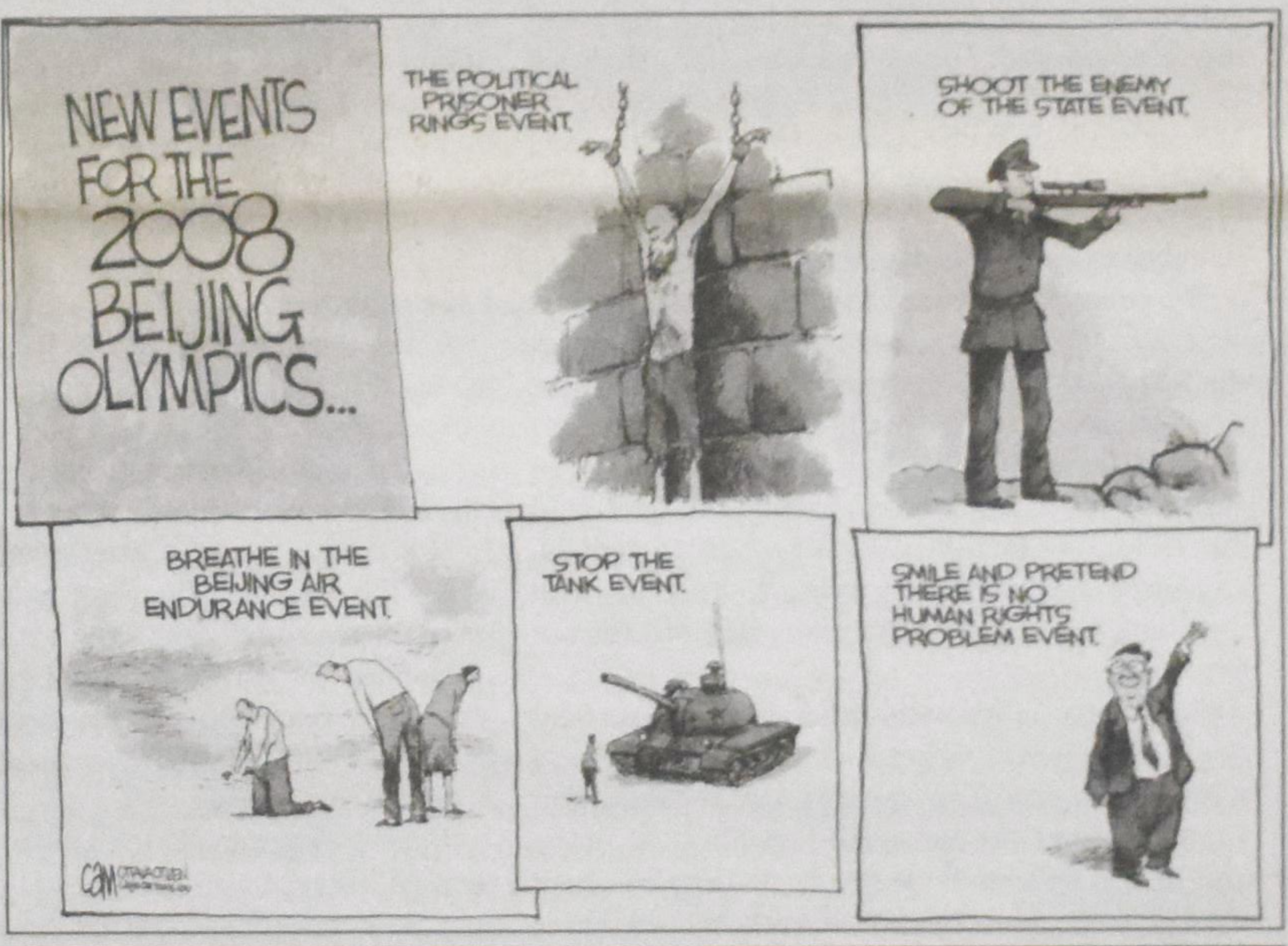
As a long time subscriber to *CC* let me first thank you for continuing to publish a Christian general interest bi-weekly. I would just like to make a few comments with reference to two articles in the July 30 issue, principally a book review by Harry Antonides on "Islamism" (focused on Lebanon, but with apparent broader connotations on Islam in general) and secondarily, an article by Bert den Boggende on Mormonism.

Without attempting to argue the validity of the specific points made in either of these articles by these faithful contributors to *CC*, and without professing any particular expertise in evaluating the subjects under discussion, I could not help but notice the overall negative and condemnatory tone of the articles. Little attempt was made to explain the apparent appeal of, and positive contributions made by, these two religions, particularly in the article on Islamism. This type of coverage of Islam has been fairly consistent in *CC* over the last number of years, in my recollection.

I have not noticed a similar condemnatory coverage of secular culture, and one-sided negative exposure of, for example, the downsides of the secular entertainment industry, or for that matter, of market economics. Is this indicative of our apparent comfort with secular culture? Is it valid to engage with secular culture, but not with other religious traditions?

Would not an appreciation of the positive contributions made by other religions open the possibility of finding areas of common purpose, as well as possibly allowing for reconciliation, if needed? Rather than articulating the threat, negative aspects, or deficiencies of other religions, it would perhaps be more fruitful for us to focus on the development of, and adherence to, the positive witness of the Christian message.

Sincerely,
Hans Speelman
Calgary, Alberta



Re: "Eight flags over the Artic," *CC*, Aug 27

In your coverage you mention that "The artic thaw may eventually make the long sought-after Northwest Passage a reality." I thought it already was.

It is true that for centuries explorers sought a sea route across the top of North America. There were many failed attempts to find a path through the icy artic waters, often including loss of life. History does not discount the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen's scientific expedition with the *Gjoa* from 1903 to 1906, nor the travels of the Hudson Bay Company's *Aklavik* 1937.

However, the "reality" you speculate about was achieved by RCMP Sergeant Henry A. Larsen (as he then was) and his crew, sailing the RCMP *St. Roch*. In 1940, Sgt. Larsen received orders to sail from Vancouver to Halifax by way of the Northwest Passage. The *St. Roch* departed Vancouver on June 23, 1940. They spent the winter of 1940-41 ice-bound at Walker Bay on the west side of Victoria Island. During the summer of 1941, Larsen continued eastward, but was frozen-in again for the winter at Pasley Bay. In the summer of 1942, Larsen picked his way among the ice flows and sailed through the Bellot Strait to open water. The long voyage ended at Halifax on October 11, 1942, making the *St. Roch* the first vessel ever to navigate the Northwest Passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.

But there was more. The *St. Roch* underwent overhaul, got a new engine, and began its westward voyage from Halifax on July 22, 1944. On this occasion Larsen was fortunate in finding an ice-free route, and the 7295 mile or 11672 kilometer oneway voyage was completed, without stopping, in the remarkably short time of just 86 days.

With her arrival at Vancouver on October 16, 1944, the *St. Roch* became the first vessel ever to navigate the long sea passage in both directions.

During the months the *St. Roch* was frozen-in, the ship also constituted a regular RCMP land detachment flying the Canadian flag (as it then was) and its RCMP crew carried out police patrols and performed under our national flag other Canadian policing duties in the adjacent territory.

Larsen retired from the Force in 1961 with the rank of Superintendent and died in Vancouver in 1964. The RCMP *St.Roch* was decommissioned in 1954 and is now the main attraction at the Vancouver Maritime Museum. Supt. Larsen's exploits brought him many honours as well as wide international recognition. His small 80 ton Canadian RCMP ship and its crew triumphing over the hazardous artic route boosted morale of all Canadians during the dark days of World War II, but what stands out is that the widely publicized event was at the time internationally recognized and acknowledged as reaffirming Canada's sovereignty in the North. I don't see any reason why it should not now.

That little Russian titanium flag you refer to was somewhat less than heroically dropped mechanically underwater to the bottom from the safety and comfort of a Russian submarine. That insignificant claiming deed substantially pales to the efforts of the late Supt. Larsen and his crew.

Ralph L.De Groot
is a retired RCMP superintendent residing in Peterborough, Ontario

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Opinion

The gospel of success and material well-being

Harry der Nederlanden

In North America we've long been acquainted with the school of televangelists and other who proclaim the "prosperity gospel," sometimes also referred to as the "Name it and claim it" gospel. Jesus wants you to have an abundant life, the preachers proclaim. He doesn't want you to live in poverty and in want. And when they speak of abundance, they don't just mean vague things like contentment and family and a closer walk with God; they mean material things like a good home, cars, things that make life easier, more comfortable, more enjoyable.

Some of these preachers come right out and tell their audiences that if they only believe strongly enough (and contribute generously, of course) and discipline their lives according to Scripture, they will be blessed: their businesses will be more successful, they will get control over their lives and finances, their families will work more harmoniously and they will prosper in every way.

In America this sort of preaching has become associated with the names of Joel Osteen, Mike Murdock, Kenneth Hagin, Creflo Dollar and T.D. Jakes. But it is spreading rapidly to Latin America and Africa. According to a valuable article by Paul Gifford in the *Christian Century*, the prosperity gospel is becoming very influential in the fast-growing Pentecostal churches in the developing world. One of the main themes he hears proclaimed in these churches is: "God desires to bless you beyond your wildest dreams and wildest expectations." And the preacher is not speaking eschatologically or of the world to come. He is speaking of this present life and of blessings in material and financial terms.

Gifford wrties: "The theme of success emerges also in an explicit preaching of a prosperity gospel according to which God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share in Christ's victory over sin, sickness and poverty – blessings which can be obtained by a confession of faith. This gospel is invariably linked with ideas of 'seed faith,' or with the biblical image of 'sowing and reaping.' Tithes and offerings become instruments of prosperity."

In the network of Winner Chapels that were begun in Nigeria by David Oyedepo in 1983 and which have spread to 40 other African nations, Gifford tells us, "the testimonies are almost all about material success – scholarships, jobs, cars and promotions." In one worship service, he relates, Bill Gates was mentioned twice; Jesus not at all.

The preachers come to be treated as prophets and as possessed of a power to uplift all their followers. They exemplify the prosperity gospel themselves by living big – living in big houses and driving big cars and hobnobbing with big people.

Gifford is, however, reluctant to condemn the movement out of hand because it does succeed in instilling hope, discipline, pride and a much needed sense of empowerment among people used to seeing themselves as victims and as condemned to poverty. Richard Mouw supports him in this: commenting on Gifford's article he says, "Marginalized groups of people do need to hear the encouraging words that provide incentives in circumstances in which it is all too easy to give up."

But surely we don't have to have recourse to a therapeutic rationale that applies only to marginalized people. The entire Old Testament is redolent with promises that do not distinguish spiritual from material blessings. God's promises to Israel speak of numerous descendants, land (one flowing with milk and honey), and one day a victorious nation to which the kings of other nations will bring tribute.

During the Middle Ages there was a strong tendency to spiritualize the gospel and to speak of the material and the physical as something we should deny. At the very least, working with material things was considered inferior to being busy with devotional and churchly things.

It was the Reformation that recovered the materialism of the Old Testament, insisting that the material and the physical world is no less pleasing to God than the spiritual. It is not something inferior, and to be busy working it and exploiting it is just as holy an activity as prayer and worship. God wants us to serve him in this physical, material world, and through it to also serve our neighbors. Perhaps the gospel of prosperity tend to lose sight of this sharing, self-giving dimension (as do we all).

A speech by Dennis Bakke in #13 of the "think" series of CDs published by the Work Research Foundation on "Gospel-Based leadership" says it very powerfully. Bakke stresses that the world of work and business is not just a mission field. It is a holy activity in and of itself. Most of us are called to so-called "secular" work. In it we become co-workers with God, not as evangelists, but simply to serve the ordinary needs of people in society.

Our daily work is how we seek to enhance not only our own well-being but also of our neighbor. Faith does connect us with a God who is interested in our material well-being, and those communities and nations that seek to live by God's Word will be blessed. However, to turn this into an individualistic gospel that promises that each and every believer will individually prosper is to set the

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Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

Simple thoughts

Camping is simple, sensual living. I like getting up in the morning and having my mind preoccupied with simple thoughts like: shall we hike, swim, or just sit around and read until noon? Life pares down to its barest essentials: hunting and gathering, then free time. The day is a combination of sun, water, wind, exercise, food. Worries are few: bears, storms, noisy neighbours.

By comparison home life seems so complex. Juggling schedules, responding to phone and e-mail, managing the demands of family, friends, work, recreation and church – layer upon layer of commitments, errands, and compulsions. It is so easy to over-extend, over-commit, and over-load our lives. We become less like human beings, and more like machines, trying to keep up with the conveyer belt of distractions that bid for our attention.

Simplicity is actually considered a spiritual discipline. Quaker writer Richard Foster suggests it is the nurturing of an inward focus and unity that frees our lives up outwardly, resulting in peace and joy. Simplicity is being single-minded about the kingdom of God and discerning clearly where our lives intersect with it and where we depart from it. It resists halfhearted commitments; it is enthusiastic in its "Yes!" and firm in its "No!"

A gift to be simple

Simplicity lessens anxiety and challenges our addictions, but it is not a discipline intended only as personal therapy. It is a stewardship issue, a neighbour-love issue, and an earth-care issue. It is said we must live simply so others can simply live. Older generations were frugal and thrifty for similar reasons. The more you save of your time, energy and finances, the more you can give away to a church agency, a Christian school, or a community project.

Whittling away at your over-connected life takes a morsel of deliberateness. I have a friend who is pursuing a simplicity theme in his life. He just disconnected his computer from the internet at home. "I can read e-mail at work," he said. Similarly, I had opportunity to renew a magazine subscription today, but I turned it down. I can read of copy of it at the library. On a deeper scale, my wife and I decided to both work part-time, and thus cultivate a stronger presence in our home and community. It is truly "a gift to be simple" as the old Shaker dance-hymn suggests.

Life margins

A friend was praising M.D. Richard Swenson's books on "margins." Margins are the space in various areas of our lives – physical, emotional, time, financial – that can protect us from overload stress. The idea has some definite merit.

Think of a piece of lined paper. You can fill up all the space on the right hand side, but you leave the margins open. They are the empty space – intended for stuff that might come up later, or just to give perspective to the other stuff. Margins give you room to breathe, room to expand, room to do different things.

We over-program our lives too quickly – perhaps afraid of large, empty margins. Unfortunately, we have little time for unexpected things, whether it be crises like sick friends, needy people, or funerals, or for small celebrations, like coffee with some friends, lazy chats with the neighbours, or a walk in the park. We have little time to reflect on our lives and journal our thoughts, and we lose contact with our deeper selves. The gospel is that life in Christ sets you free. That is good, good news. So here is my note to myself this new school season: try and make home life more like camping in the woods. Keep life simple, focused, slow. In a way, that is all our life is anyway: a brief sojourn with a few close relations on a small swathe of land. We are small, time-limited creatures, and that fragile, fleeting beauty can be savored in simplicity.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

Stewardship

Examing the Seven Deadly Sins

A Calvin College professor has turned one of her colleges courses into a guidebook on spiritual development for teens and young adults.

Philosophy professor Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung teaches a class on the seven deadly sins to Calvin seniors, explaining to them that the sins function as a tool to diagnose barriers to discipleship. As part of the class, her students then teach the concept to 18-year-olds.

From that engagement with her students, and the "field-testing," has come *The Seven Deadly Sins: A Survival Guide,* available Friday, September 7 from Faith Alive Christian Resources.

In her take on the classic motif of Christian discipleship, DeYoung identifies each of the sins (or, as she prefers to call them, capital vices) as a spiritual barrier to discipleship. Students learn to diagnose those barriers to discipleship in their own lives, to remove them, and to replace them with new habits of thought and feeling.

"The book really is a translation project," says DeYoung. "I seek to take what is rich and enduring in the tradition and make it real and relevant for young people."

DeYoung anchors *The Seven Deadly Sins* in the Bible and in the church's historic teaching about moral development, using quotes and small selections to introduce students to the church fathers. Each chapter includes interactive activities to engage students.

Last summer she received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities which payed for her participation in a seminar at Darwin College at the University of Cambridge called "The Seven Deadly Sins as Cultural Constructions in the Middle Ages."

That seminar gave her a chance to dig even deeper into a topic that she has made a passion since her Ph.D. days at the University of Notre Dame.

Faith Alive Christian Resources publishes resources for children's and youth ministries, small groups and Bible studies, church leadership, evangelism, and worship.

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people of God up for a fall. And we shouldn't hesitate to condemn – or at least correct – such a gospel. In the end it will cause those who remain impoverished or who fall from riches into poverty to question the strength of their faith and the faithfulness of God.

God's greatest blessings are "spiritual" and eschatological, but the spiritual encompasses and carries this material world so that Christians can glorify God in both prosperity and want, for in and through it all we know he is working out what is best for us.

But the Middle Ages still have something to teach us too. They knew that the way to God and to the world passes through self-denial. What good does it do for a person to gain the whole world and to lose his soul?

Time to give

Everyone has time they can give!

"Are you sure? I'm so busy. I've already got a frantic schedule and I just can't add another church thing – ask someone else!"

A new school and church season begins and the requests for volunteers for this or that are coming at us all over the place. Yet I firmly believe even the busiest person still has 'time' to give.

There may be some people who have the time to give but feel there is not much that they can do because of their physical limitations. Consider my friend, Theresa: she is limited in what she can do by her poor eyesight. Her view on the world is very narrow but that's not how she behaves. It may seem that she is not able to do much, but through God's work in her, she takes on the world of poverty, injustice and keeps up with the major issues of this world through prayer. She is a faithful prayer warrior and I know I can count on her prayers for my work. I know that even now her prayers and the testimony of her life are helping me to write this article. She is an example of how an elderly woman in a senior's home devoting her time to reading and prayer – can and does make a difference! I know she regularly prays for family members (especially their spiritual warfare) and that she is a source of encouragement for those whose lives she may touch with her presence.

Everyone has time to give. Yes, really, but a more pertinent question to ask is: "To what am I giving my time?" That's a question each one of us needs to revisit on a regular basis.

God created time. He set boundaries for each of us – and our individual clocks are ticking. All of our time is God's time. We are accountable to him for its stewardship. God gives each one of us enough time and he also offers to release us from the bondage to the limitations of time – now and eternally through Jesus. In fact, the way we use our time today has eternal significance.

So, everyone has time to give and it can all be dedicated to God! In a holistic worldview we acknowledge that all that we do should be done as if given to God – even the boring, routine work – as the Contemporary Testimony says so well:

"In our work, even in dull routine, we hear the call to serve our Lord. We must work for more than wages, and manage for more than profit, so that mutual respect and the just use of goods and skills may shape the work place, and so that, while we earn or profit useful products and services may result...." (Article 51a)

As Christians, we have a higher order priority that ascribes eternal significance to the giving of our time.

By setting our priorities under a God centered paradigm we always have time to give – even for activities we consider minor. Therefore, it is important for us not to be too hasty to excuse ourselves when we are asked to be a Sunday School teacher, a pastoral elder, a greeter, a GEMS councilor, to take a turn making coffee, host a small prayer/fellowship group, etc. Each request ought to cause us to re-examine our priorities. Such a review helps to make best use of the time, gifts and opportunities for service that God gives us. Such a re-examination is a good thing!

Everyone has time to give! It is a matter of setting priorities, and so being able to put aside regular time for voluntary activities requires a re-ordering of the time you have, and that takes planning. For more on making time by planning time see my previous article on "Managing time" (*CC* Sept 12/05 or my website article 27) or review the summary below.

Stewardly tip: Time planning steps

1. *Create a task list* of all the things that you need to do at home, at work, as a volunteer, etc. Include both immediate and long-term items, deadlines, committee or council meetings, home visits (elders), appointments, birthdays and anniversaries, and things like "the car needs servicing". Make the list as complete as possible – incomplete lists can make you anxious. What did I forget? Leave space to add more as your day progresses (phone calls, emails, mail).
2. *Prioritize* by coding your list:

- Consider which items on the list are urgent and important – circle them.
- Consider the item(s) that give you the most sense of dread – I really don't want to do this –an item that you know you'll *put-off-until-it's-almost-too-late* if you don't do something about it now. Circle them in red.
- Consider the items that are important but not urgent – items that don't have a deadline today – but are important for your work and your future career. Mark them with an arrow in the margin.
- Consider the items that build relationships: phone calls, visits, email, thank you cards etc. – circle or asterisk them – they are very important and should be allotted priority.
- Skimp on the trivial items. Some are 'no-brainers' – leave them for when your mental energy is low. Delegate these to someone else if you can. Don't mark them with anything – if they get left for another day that's just fine.
- Decide when you will block out some time for devotions, reading or studying for your self-development. In the margin write a 'target time interval 12:45-1:15.

3. Get started – Act! Start with a circled item, preferably one of the red ones: getting at least one of the dread items out of the way will make you feel so much better. Note and obey the target time (see above) that you set aside for devotions or self-development. Mix in some of the arrow (important but not urgent) items among the urgent ones.
4. *Scratch off completed tasks*! Crossing off a completed item is satisfying. A well scratched off list at the end of the day makes you feel good and gives you a sense of accomplishment.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Water care

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Church

Mother Teresa's doubts show her faith say Philippine bishops

Maurice Malanes

Manila (ENI) – Roman Catholic bishops in the Philippines say suggestions in a forthcoming book that the late Nobel peace prize laureate Mother Teresa of Calcutta wrestled with doubt about the existence of God demonstrates her saintliness and faith.

"The darker the situation, the brighter the victory of living through it," Bishop Carlito Cenzon of Baguio told Ecumenical News International on 29 August. "Mother Teresa may have doubted God's existence, but she showed in her life that she trusted and depended on this very God. This makes her sanctity all the more extraordinary."

Cenzon was reacting to media reports about the book, "Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light", excepts of which have been published by *Time* magazine. The book contains letters between Teresa and her confessors and superiors over a period of more than 60 years. *Time* reports they show that for the last decades of her life she felt no presence of God whatsoever.

One letter from 1979 has her writing to a spiritual confidant, "Jesus has a very special love for you ... as for me, the silence and emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see."

Mother Teresa was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu to Albanian parents in 1910 in Skopje, Macedonia. At the age of 18 she left for India, where in 1946 she started working with the poorest of the community in the slums of Calcutta. For this vocation, she received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She died in India in 1997 and in 2003 was beatified by Pope John Paul II, a step that often, but not always, leads to sainthood.

The book has been compiled by the Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk, a member of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, and the person responsible for petitioning for her sainthood and collecting supporting materials.

Kolodiejchuk was reported by the Associated Press as saying that, read in context, Mother Teresa's faith remained. Her unwavering belief that God was working through her showed that while she missed a feeling of connection with God, she didn't doubt his existence, he said.

Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon in central Philippines said in an interview with the Catholic-run Radio Veritas that many saints had doubted the existence of God at some point in the lives. "But such doubt all the more increased their trust and faith in God," he said.

Indian churches say communists seeking to control Christian schools

Anto Akkara

Bangalore, India (ENI) – A church education group in the southern Indian state of Kerala has strongly criticised the state's communist-led coalition government, saying it is attempting to curtail the rights of church-run educational institutions. "We will not make any comprise on our stand on the question of our rights," declared the retired Roman Catholic archbishop of Changanacherry, Joseph Powathil, chairperson of the Inter-Church Council for Education, which includes Catholics, Orthodox and Protestant churches as members.

Powathil had made his statement on August 19 at a Catholic youth convention in Chenganacherry after a row between churches and the state government about the management and admission rights of privately-run schools.

The Christian community in Kerala accounts for nearly 20 percent of the state's 34 million residents. Kerala has 8000 government-funded private schools, and churches operate more than 3200 of these institutions.

Church leaders say plans by the communist-led government to give village and municipal councils a greater say in the running of these schools would affect their rights to manage and control admissions to the educational establishments.

Several Catholic dioceses have issued pastoral letters criticising the Left Democratic Front coalition government's education policy and have held marches to protest against what they describe as a bid by communists to wrest control of the churches' educational institutions.

The communist party leadership has told the bishops to withdraw their pastoral letters, while its student wings described the church leadership as "whitewashed tombs".

The Rev. Abraham Mar Paulos, president of the Kerala Council of Churches, which groups 11 Orthodox and Protestant churches, told Ecumenical News International that such comments were "extremely painful" as they "belittled and trivialised" the contribution of the churches in Kerala education. "Unfortunately, education seems to have become a tool to enhance a political agenda rather than the public interest," said Paulos.

The Church in Kerala has played a pivotal role in education for decades, in many areas before government schools were set up.

Pakistan: missing Christian girls married off to Muslims

Shamaila Tabassum

ISTANBUL (Compass Direct News) – Two Pakistani Christian children have converted to Islam and married Muslim men after they went missing earlier this month in Faisalabad, according to apparently falsified marriage certificates delivered to their families.

The certificate for the missing 16-year-old girl indicates that the marriage took place 12 days before her disappearance, and the other certificate puts the missing 11-year-old's age at 18.

Police seem to be stalling efforts to recover the minors, prompting the girls' lawyer to bring a case against officers in the Punjab city of Faisalabad this week. "This type of incident is increasing in Faisalabad," a representative of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan told Compass from Faisalabad today.

When Zunaira Rasheed, 11, disappeared from her home in Faisalabad's Warispura neighborhood on August 5, her mother was at first reluctant to go to the police, she said. Abida Parveen said she was worried that news of the disappearance might ruin her daughter's "honor" and with it her chance of marrying, according to Pakistani journalist Qaiser Felix of *Asia News*.

While searching for her daughter, Parveen was approached by a Muslim man from the neighborhood, Rana Azher, who offered to help her in exchange for money. "We saw your daughter going in a rickshaw with Muhammad Adnan," Rana Azher told Parveen. The Christian mother immediately went to Adnan's home but was not allowed inside. Desperate for help, Parveen eventually scraped together 12,000 rupees (US$200) to pay Azher to negotiate with Adnan on her behalf.

Azher soon produced a copy of a certificate of marriage between Rasheed and Adnan but failed to do anything more. "Unfortunately, I found out too late that those men who said they would help me only want money," Parveen said in an *Asia News* article. "I have sold all I have, but it wasn't enough, and now I am alone."

The August 9 certificate, signed by Muslim cleric Kareem Muhammad Ramazan in Lahore, gave Rasheed's name as Fatma Bibi (indicating her conversion to Islam) and stated her age as 18. Despite the name and age difference, Rasheed's family said they were not in doubt that the Fatma Bibi indicated in the certificate was the same person as their daughter because the certificate gives Rasheed's address and father's name.

Parveen eventually registered a report with local police, but law enforcement officers have yet to recover her daughter. The Christian woman, who works as a maid in Muslim homes to support her four children, said that Rasheed had been engaged to be married to a relative.

"They are a very poor family from a backward area, and there is a practice among backwards and poor people to get their children married early," journalist Felix told Compass. He said it was not clear whether this marriage was actually scheduled to take place any time in the near future.

Kidnapping accusation

In a second incident last week, Shamaila Tabassum, 16, disappeared after telling relatives she was on her way to the hospital with several Muslim neighbors to visit her father, whom she said had suffered a serious accident.

The Christian girl's family became worried after her supposedly hospitalized father arrived home from work in perfect health.

Her uncles said that they had passed Tabassum while they were bicycling home from work on the afternoon of August 16, approximately three kilometers from their home in Faisalabad's Elahiabad neighborhood.

Seeing her uncles, Tabassum exited the Toyota Corolla she was riding in, told them that her father had been admitted to the city's Allied Hospital, and then left in the car. According to the uncles, three Muslim neighbors – Mohammad Mazhar, his sister Naseem Akhter and a cousin named Zheer Ahmad – as well as an unknown fourth man, were in the car with Tabassum.

Worried for his daughter's safety, Tabassum's father visited Mazhar's house that evening, lawyer Khalil Tahir said. "[Mazhar's] house was locked," Tahir said, and Mazhar's relatives claimed not to know his whereabouts. On August 18, Tabassum's father registered a case with police at Faisalabad's Sadar police station, accusing Mazhar of kidnapping his daughter. He indicated in the police report that he was worried Mazhar would attempt to force his daughter to convert, said lawyer Tahir.

On Wednesday evening (August 22), a former head of the Elahiabad union council visited Tabassum's home to deliver a certificate of her marriage to Mazhar. "Now your daughter has converted to Islam, so there is no need to go to court," Rana Javed told the girl's father. According to the certificate, Tabassum and Mazhar were married by a Muslim sheikh in the city of Sargodha, 60 kilometers (37 miles) north of Faisalabad. But the document was dated August 4, fully 12 days before Tabassum's disappearance.

"This is obviously a falsified document, because on August 4 she was at home," Tahir said.

The document also carried a new Muslim name for Tabassum, indicating her conversion to Islam.

Though Pakistanis under the age of 18 cannot carry out legal transactions – including conversion and marriage – without the consent of their guardian, prejudiced lower court judges often turn a blind eye to the law in order to favor Muslims in cases against Christians, Tahir said.

The Christian lawyer said he had agreed to take both cases pro bono because both families are extremely poor.

"Many Pakistani Christians are poor, and this is the reason that they are being targeted," Felix told Compass. "There are many other individual cases of forced conversion that go unreported because of their poverty." Felix said that impoverished Christians are often unable to pursue their cases in court when their interests conflict with those of more influential Muslims.

Amina Zaman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan told Compass that three priests from the area recently reported a growing number of incidents similar to that of the disappearance, conversion and questionable marriages of Tabassum and Rasheed. "It is increasing in Pakistan and especially in Faisalabad," Zaman said.

Christians make up 1.5 percent of Pakistan's population, according to the U.S. State Department's latest report on religious freedom.

Bangladesh: Muslims force converts back to Islam

DHAKA, Bangladesh (Compass Direct News) – Local Muslims in Nilphamari district and Islamist missionaries from abroad are hauling recently converted Christians to mosques and forcing them to return to Islam, area sources said.

Evangelist and pastor Sanjoy Roy said the Muslims have forced 27 recently baptized Christians to return to Islam. Another 14 recent converts are still facing incessant pressure to return to Islam from villagers and from Muslim missionaries called Tabligh Jamat. "The Muslims are still threatening us and saying that they will change our faith," Roy told Compass. "We wanted secrutiy and police protection, but the district commissioner did not accept our application."

Police provided eight officers to protect area Christians on July 28 but left on August 5. Muslims in Durbachari village then began capturing and hauling all male converts to a mosque to return to Islam, forcing them to sign or provide fingerprint signatures on written or blank papers. As nearly all the converts cannot read, area sources said, they did not understand they were signing or giving fingerprint signatures to return to Islam.

Earlier, on July 26, a local source said, local Muslims and Tabligh Jamat missionaries gathered in a schoolyard near the homes of some of the Christians who had been baptized in a river on June 12. Using a microphone, the Muslims threatened violence if the converts did not come out.

Fearing for their lives, the Christians emerged and gathered. The source said the Muslims asked them why they had become Christians and, furious, told them that Bangladesh was a Muslim country "where you cannot change your faith by your own will." "They said, 'How dare you become Christian in a Muslim country?'" the area source said. "After that incident, some believers went to the local police station seeking protection, but police did not respond."

Most of the Christians are laborers who rely on new opportunities each day to feed their families, and the Muslim villagers are withholding work from them, Christian sources said. Local Muslims are also vandalizing their homes and taking their daily essentials.

"Some of them in fear of life left the village," said one source. "They cannot catch fish in the river and buy or sell anything in the markets under the pressure of neighbors."

Threat of laceration

Abul Hossen, 38, a fruit seller, told Compass that Muslims in the mosque threatened to hang him in a tree upside down and lacerate his body with a blade. "Then he will understand what are the consequences of being a Christian," the Muslims told him, Hossen said, adding that they always use "filthy language whenever they see the Christians."

Hossen said the Muslims "do not allow us to net fish in the river" and offered him 5,000 taka (US$75) and a mobile phone handset if he returned to Islam. "But I did not give up my faith, because I found Christ in my heart," Hossen told Compass. "They threatened me with severe consequences if I do not go back to Islam. I said I am ready to offer up my life to Christ, but I won't renounce my faith in him." Hossen said that, at night, he and his wife take turns keeping vigil while the other sleeps. "We are always worried that something dangerous may happen anytime," he said.

Day laborer Mohammad Ali, 55, told Compass that around 20 people came to his house and took him to the mosque. "After [taking] me inside the mosque, they pressured me to recant my faith," Ali said. "But I did not give up my faith."

Ali said the local Muslims and Jamat missionaries continue to come to his house four or five times a day to pressure him to give up his faith. "They always tell me to meet their emir [chief cleric] whenever they see me," he said.

Another day laborer identified only as 37-year-old Sultan said that when local Muslims took him to the mosque a few days ago, he won approval to go outside to perform ablutions [ritual washing] before prayer. Once he had washed his hands and legs, he said, he snuck away. "Some 50 to 60 people surrounded my house, and some of them came to me with knife drawn," he said. "When they dragged me to the mosque, they tore my shirt. They tried to change my faith, offering lots of financial incentives."

Sultan said the Muslims have declined to hire him for any work, taken his cooking utensils, vandalized his house and threatened to burn it down.

"How will I live?" he said. "I am out of my mind with worry. Leaders in our locality threatened to cut my tendon. They say, 'This is an Islamic country, why have you become Christian?'"

A laborer identified only as Motaleb, 38, said village Muslims came to his house with cooked rice and meat. "They gave me sweetmeat," he said. "They said, 'What has Christ given you? We will give you many things, if you come back to Islam.'"

Motaleb said the Muslims pressured him into returning to Islam after they forcibly took him to the mosque. "They do not allow me to go to the local market to buy or sell anything," he added. "I do not get any work. Whenever our little kids go to other peoples' houses, neighbors beat them."

On June 26, two weeks after the converts in Durbachari village were baptized, Muslim villagers attacked and severely beat them. On June 27, they gave the Christians a 24-hour deadline to leave the village or face further beatings and the destruction of their homes. Last-minute intervention from local officials provided temporary relief; officials also agreed to station a special police force in the village for three months, but the officers left after only a week.

Offering money

Bangladeshi Christian leader Edward Ayub said he was gravely concerned about the tactics of the village Muslims and Tabligh Jamat missionaries, terming the actions "social and religious tyranny."

"Some Christians changed their faith under social pressure, not from the bottom of their heart," he told Compass. "Changing faith forcefully is not the way of preaching any religion. It is a flagrant abuse of religious rights and violation of the Bangladeshi constitution, where it is written that every citizen has the freedom to practice or change his or her religion."

Another local Christian leader, Albert Adhikari Hirak, said a Muslim cleric has repeatedly questioned and threatened Barek Ali, a 35-year-old rickshaw driver, "asking how much money he received for his conversion and demanding that he abandon his Christian faith. Ali denied receiving monetary incentives."

Barek Ali said he still has faith in Christ. "Local people are putting lots of pressure on me and threatening me to become Muslim," he said. "Secretly I try to meet with the believers, but local Muslims are staking out my every movement. I am leading a fugitive life in faith."

Hatem Ali, a 23-year-old itinerant fruit seller, said he was forcibly taken to the mosque on August 8 as he returned home from his small business and was only released on August 13. The imam of the mosque and the Tabligh Jamat fed him something that made him senseless, he said, and they prohibited him from coming home.

His uncle, Motaleb Hossen, went to the mosque but was not allowed to see him. Peeping through the window the night of August 8, however, Motaleb Hossen saw that Ali was sleeping on the floor with Jamat missionaries surrounding him. Mosque keepers also prohibited his mother from seeing him that night and the next day, Adhikari said. "Jamat people used abusive language against her and also threatened to attack her physically if she goes again," Adhikari said. "They forced him to accept Islam and he 'became Muslim.'"

German priest urges Catholic re-think on HIV/AIDS

Anli Serfontein

Trier, Germany (ENI) – A German Roman Catholic priest living in Cape Town and working with AIDS orphans has urged a re-consideration of the ban on condoms to prevent the spread of HIV, saying that the theology of his church on AIDS is more than 40 years out of date.

In a book "God, AIDS, Africa", published in Germany during August, the Rev. Stefan Hippler appeals to Pope Benedict XVI to come up with a theological response to the AIDS pandemic facing Africa.

"The Catholic sexual morals equal a death sentence for those people who follow it strictly. In Africa that is especially the case for wives whose husbands are unfaithful," he writes in his book. "The times in which we condemn people, only because they think for themselves, should be over and done with."

He concludes: "The Catholic Church as the biggest global institution can fight like no other body against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It could, if only it wanted to."

Hippler works as a priest in a German-speaking congregation in Cape Town in South Africa's parliamentary capital, and also initiated an AIDS charity project called "Hope" which caters for HIV-positive children and parents.

It is estimated that 2000 new HIV infections occur every day in southern Africa and some two million South Africans have died of AIDS-related illnesses in the past two decades.

In an interview published in Germany's *Trierischer Volksfreund* newspaper he was asked whether he is scared of being disciplined by the church and rebuked by the Pope.

"I have lived in Africa for the last 11 years and am dealing with this issue every day. And at some point one has to take a decision," he told the newspaper. "The whole misery that I experience also has to find expression in what I am also digesting theologically and ecclesiastically,"

He said that the present theology of the church is more than 40 years out of date and he appealed to Pope Benedict, whom he described as an intelligent theologian, to provide a relevant new theology.

"The question of what condoms could today mean in the deployment of protecting humans should be considered anew," the priest said.

The book is co-authored by award-winning journalist Bartholomäus Grill and comes with a foreword by Swedish author Henning Mankell. The authors intend to send a copy to Pope Benedict in Rome.

Home/Homeless

Summertime . . . and the lady's crochetin'

My rooster is always excited to see me in the morning. He looks up, waiting for whatever the garbage bucket brings for a snack. He chuck-chuck-chucks with pride and zeal if I offer him a piece of bread, which he doesn't eat, but gives to his harem favourite. And then he crows.

In the confines of a small chicken coop, he crows. He assaults my ears. He crows. He provokes a headache.

He crows. Not once, but a couple times.

So much for the peaceful pastoral scene.

I retreat to the house for some shalom, and make a cup of coffee while trying to shake the ringing out of my head, and decide to take the coffee outside to the front yard, away from the chicken coop and my Wagnerian rooster.

My friend Affina, visiting from Surrey, B.C., joins me. We sit on lawn chairs in the shade of an aspen, talk a little about books or philosophy, watch birds, think, meditate, and . . . she crochets. She is almost always doing this: making hand-drying towels, hot-pads, dishcloths. She has been my friend since 1975 and I still don't know exactly what crocheting is or what she sees in it.

But she is there. A friend with hooks or needles or sticks, strands of yarn or string, and a plan for making something-or-other.

*****

And so we sit. There are not too many species of birds around right now. At the feeder it is pine siskins, purple finches, a couple juncoes, and one chickadee. Barn swallows are in the air, but not much else right now. The rooster crows, far away in the background.

The grass is in its in-between time: not sure whether it is growing or going dormant – just staying green and soft. The dandelions seem to have lost their aggression.

The temperature is what many people would call cool. I still have my long-sleeved shirt on, although by afternoon it will be close to 30 C. The wind is light, not cool, not hot. I suppose the wind is to me what I am to my dog as I lightly tickle his ears while he dreams dog day-dreams in contentment. (I'd say that the wind was sussurating, if I knew what that meant.)

*****

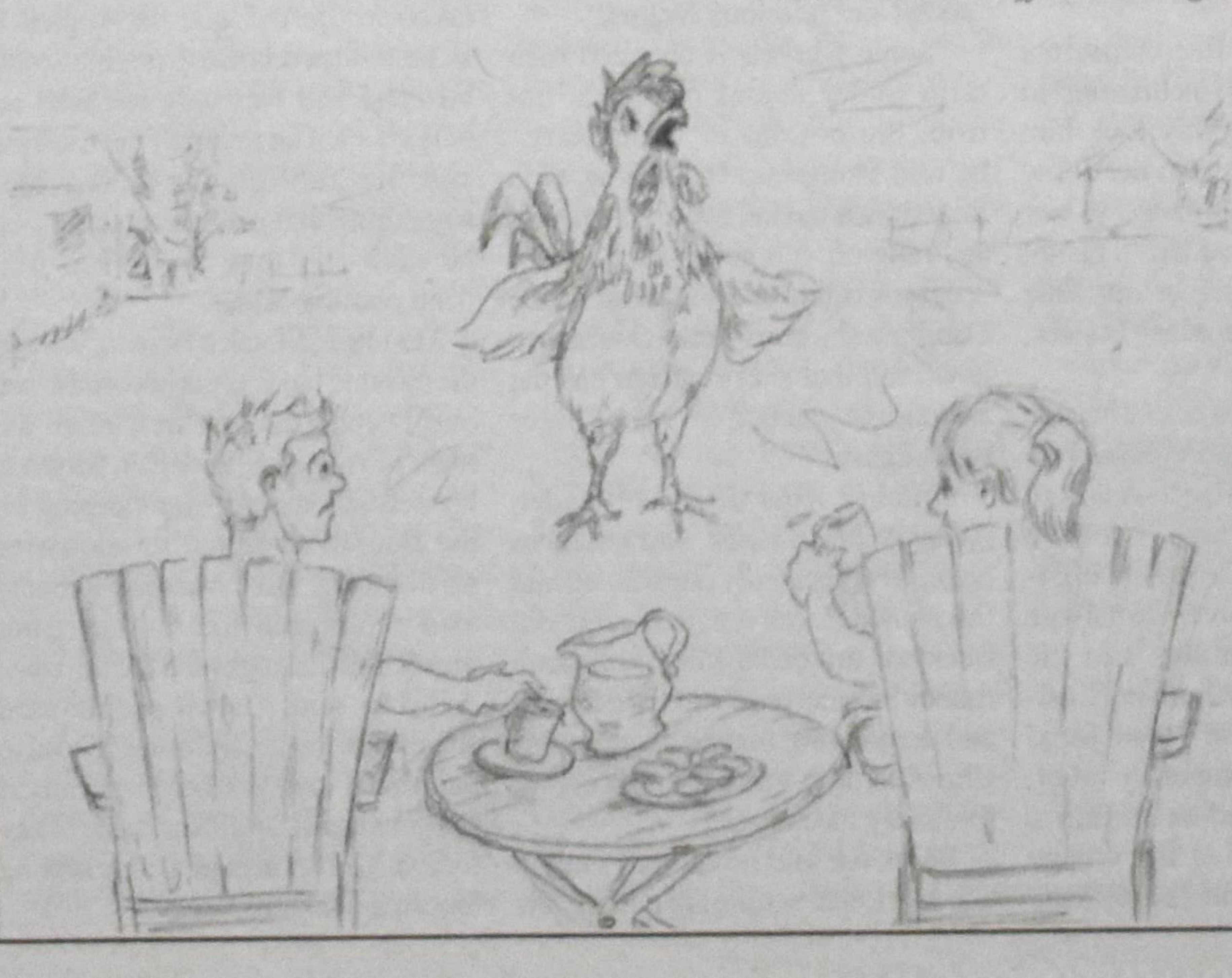
And so we talk, or sit silently. It is a morning we'll need for when "the evil days come." It's a day to sustain us when sickness or violence, depression or betrayal hit us.

I'll remember this one on other days, I hope, when I "find no pleasure in them", when . . .

The sun and the light
and the moon and the stars grow dark,
and the clouds return after the rain."

A summer morning of Zen-ish significance. A morning to remember. A day with a friend sitting there crocheting yet another dishcloth. A friend, speaking little, but working hard and wishing me well, like another Friend who, sits beside me, wishes me well, and works things out for good, whether I see Him there or not.

Curt Gesch, a retired teacher from Quick, B.C., dedicates this meditation to Kenn Faber and Affina de Jong.



Moving the homeless out of shelters, into homes

A new approach is being heralded not only as more successful in fighting chronic homelessness, but more cost effective.

Alexandra Marks

New York – Two weeks ago, Moises and Jennifer Cedano expected to spend the next four to six months in a homeless shelter while they saved enough money for a deposit to rent an apartment.

Today they watch two of their three children, Timothy and Francisco, jump with joy on a new bed in a new apartment.

They rented the place with help from the city's Department of Homeless Services, which decided that in the long run, it will be less expensive to help the family get stabilized in their own apartment than to have them cycle into the shelter system.

The Cedanos' experience is a reflection of a fundamental transformation in thinking about homelessness and the new model's success in combating what was once thought to be an intractable social problem.

New focus for urban homelessness

From New York to Dallas to Seattle, cities across the U.S. are focusing not just on emergency shelter, but on getting the homeless homes. As a result, they're seeing reductions in the numbers of chronically homeless people on their streets and in their shelters. The movement, known as Housing First, has had the most success in moving the chronically homeless, mentally ill, and drug addicted into housing complexes with social services, like counseling. That's proved to be more effective and less expensive than leaving people on the streets or in shelters. Now, the concept is being expanded and adapted to help the growing number of potentially homeless families like the Cedanos, giving them short-term help in getting back on their feet and, where possible, long-term help with rent subsidies.

"There's a paradigm shift occurring," says Dennis Culhane, a homelessness expert at the University of Pennsylvania. "The successes ... achieved among chronically homeless adults have led people to understand that that same paradigm shift can apply to all homeless families."

Chronic homelessness first gained widespread attention in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A major cause of its increased frequency was the de-institutionalization movement designed to get the mentally ill out of institutions and into community settings. For a variety of reasons, including lack of funding, many people ended up homeless instead. During the 1990s, a second wave of homeless people appeared in shelters: families who couldn't afford the skyrocketing cost of housing. And the homeless population ticked steadily upward.

Initially, shelters focused on helping people with psychiatric needs and drug addictions first, and worried about getting them homes afterward. With families, too, social service workers focused on job training and other help before placing them in homes.

Management vs. prevention

Homeless experts began to question that approach when they realized they were managing the homeless problem, not solving it. That's when they pioneered the Housing First concept, targeting the toughest homeless cases, the mentally ill and drug addicts who cycled through homeless shelters, emergency rooms, detox centers, and psychiatric hospitals. Professor Culhane's studies in the 1990s found this population accounted for about 10 percent of the people in shelters – but used more than 50 percent of the resources Moving these people into apartments with rent subsidies and support services was not only more humane, but more cost effective.

"It was a less expensive response than having these people being out on the street or in long-term shelter," says Philip Mangano, executive director of the Unites States Interagency Council on Homelessness. "That's because this is a population that randomly ricochets into very expensive primary and behavioral health systems costing between $30,000 and $150,000 per person per year."

Providing supportive housing, on the other hand, costs between $13,000 and $25,000 a year, says Mr. Mangano.

A study of one supportive-housing initiative in Boston released earlier this month by the Urban Institute found that the average client ended up in the hospital 102 times in the two years before getting into supportive housing. That dropped to seven days in the two years after getting into a home, saving the state $20,000 just in hospital costs. "Solving this problem turns out to be less expensive than managing it," says Mangano.

Almost 300 communities across the the country have now committed to 10-year plans to end homelessness. The federal government, under Mangano's leadership, is also asking for a record a $4.4 billion dollars in 2008 to spur the development of more supportive-housing complexes.

That success in dealing with the chronically homeless has prompted New York and other cities to experiment with similar philosophies for family homelessness. The city is taking a three-pronged approach: prevention, trying to help people with crises before they lose their homes, with an array of services from cash to pay-back rent to counseling and legal services to intervene with landlords; a short-term subsidy program to help families stabilize financially; and a diversion program that's designed to prevent families like the Cedanos from ending up in the homeless system in the first place.

Homeless

Homeless family in Reno Nevada

The Cedanos' path to 'housing first'

The Cedanos had been living with Jennifer's mother. When she moved out of state, the family couldn't afford their own apartment, so they applied for shelter. Because Moises works – he's an electrician's assistant – social workers at the homeless intake center diverted him to the city's HomeBase program. The $12 million dollar program, founded in 2004, provides intensive casework services and flexible financial assistance. The Cedanos' primary problem was that they couldn't afford a deposit on an apartment large enough for them with three children and a fourth on the way. So CAMBA, the nonprofit that provides HomeBase services for the city in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood, found the family an apartment, paid their deposit, and is helping them get a Section 8 voucher, which will give them a long-term rent subsidy. It's also going to help pay for training so that Mr. Cedano can become certified as a licensed electrician – a step up from his current job.

"This is a community-based effort to help people remain in their homes," says Robert Hess, commissioner of New York's Department of Homeless Services. "That's some of the best 'housing first' you can do."

Currently, New York has HomeBase programs in the six communities that had the highest percentage of people coming into the shelter system. While the number of people entering shelters around the city dropped 7 percent overall since 2004, the HomeBase communities saw a drop of 12 percent. Next year, Mr. Hess hopes to expand the program citywide. The budget will jump to $20 million by 2010.

A difficult question of greatest need

While critics applaud efforts to reduce chronic homelessness, there's also concern the focus on prevention and diversion takes resources away from families that are already homeless. Patrick Markee, senior. Policy analyst at the Coalition for the Homeless, notes that while homelessness of chronic adults is down as much as 13 percent in the city, the number of homeless families is at a record high, with as many as 9,000 families in shelters on a given night. He points out that as the Bush administration is spending more on some homeless services, it's cutting funds to develop more affordable housing. He also believes the city should focus on providing long-term rent subsidies.

"Families that leave shelter and have either Section 8 vouchers or move into public housing have the very lowest rates of return to shelter," he says.

While the Cedanos wait for an answer on their Section 8 application, HomeBase will help pay their rent.

"We have that kind of flexibility that a lot of other organizations don't," says Melissa Mowery, CAMBA's HomeBase director.

The Cedanos are still shocked they didn't end up in shelter. "But I had faith ... everything would work out," says Moises. He's hoping that all of his kids, including the one on the way, will grow up in this apartment.

Alexandra Marks is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

Phantom of the cornfield

Most evenings when he hears me rattling the supper dishes in the kitchen sink, my dog Rocky starts pacing in the backyard. He peers impatiently through the screen door and waits for me to come outside with a treat in my pocket, wearing my worn old running shoes. The two cats appear from their hiding spot in the flowerbed. They yawn and stretch and sleepily watch their giant buddy now prancing expectantly around my feet. Before Rocky and I can leave we have to lure Tippy and Spike into the shed for their supper. Otherwise they would follow us, lagging behind and complaining loudly every step of the way.

Some nights I have to force myself to go for a walk. But mostly it's an enjoyable part of my day. I love watching the sunset and listening to the evening songs of the birds, or the hoot owl in the bush at the back of the farm. Now and then a rabbit scoots across our path, or a groundhog disappears into its hole. On a good night we might spot a couple of deer, or a noisy bunch of Canada Geese might liven up our evening stroll. It's all part of the adventure.

One night we rounded the edge of the cornfield down by the creek and came face to face with a reddish brown steer. Rocky erupted into his version of fierce barking, yanking on the leash as if to pull my arm off. The startled cow disappeared into the corn. I decided to go back from whence we came, not wanting to spark a stampede in case the whole herd of beef cattle had breached the electric fence that keeps them in the neighbor's field.

"It's that skinny brown one isn't it?" Said our neighbor when told of the escapee. There's always one in the bunch who tests the fencing and finds his way out. Lawrence and his hired hand attempted to capture the elusive critter, but trying to corner a cow in a cornfield is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Annoyed and tired, they gave up when it got dark. "Guess I get to keep him." Said Jack. Lawrence joked in reply, "If you can catch him, you can have him. He's more trouble than he's worth."

So Mr. Brown remains footloose and fancy free. He shows up here and there around the fields, sort of like a bovine Elvis. He keeps his distance and whenever we get too close, he just steps into the cornfield and he's gone without a trace. How an animal that size can vanish between rows of corn planted a mere three feet apart is beyond me. But he manages. One evening as we walked I distinctly heard him snort just a few feet away, but I couldn't see him. Not even the tops of the corn plants rustled to reveal his hiding spot.

That's why I was surprised to see him grazing carelessly by the soybeans the other night. He munched contentedly with his head down and his hindquarters facing our way. I'm sure I could have walked up behind him and smacked his bony butt. But I was more concerned about keeping Rocky in check. Not to worry. My dog, keen predator that he is, was already on the trail. That's right. He had picked up the scent and now bounded along, urgently straining on the leash, gasping for air and probing each and every clump of weeds with his long collie nose. So intent was he on the smell of the cow that he failed to see Mr. Brown standing no more than twenty feet away.

Mr. Brown remained oblivious to our presence until I started laughing as we turned the corner away from him. I looked back over my shoulder and the cow raised his head, still chewing. His face registered surprise, but really there was nowhere to run since we were between him and the cornfield. He took a few steps away, then seemed to realize there was no danger. Rocky continued his search in the opposite direction, never suspecting that he was tracking away from the steer.

Animals amuse me. They can be such dummies. On the other hand, so can I. While I may snicker at Rocky's misplaced enthusiasm, how often don't I do the same thing? Sometimes it happens in small ways. Jack and I were in Traverse City, Michigan on July 4th. A magnificent fireworks display exploded over the bay. I stood there fiddling with shutter speed and exposure value on my camera, wishing I had a tripod. Finally Jack reminded me to actually watch the fireworks and enjoy them. I turned off the camera.

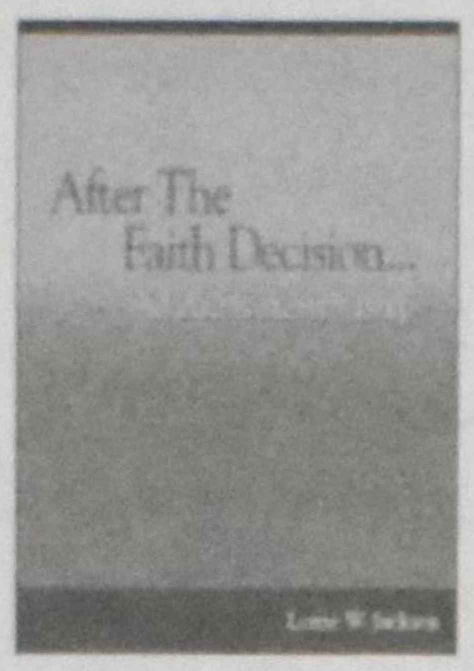
I also do it on a larger scale, even on a spiritual level. How many times do I take off willy-nilly, excitedly sniffing out a deeper relationship with God, a more significant Christian life? I may follow a narrow trail of self-imposed legalism, trying to bear a load never intended for me to carry. Other times I may run amok in a wide open field of liberalism, enjoying my "freedom," but forgetting what it cost. Either way, in the end I discover that I have sadly missed the point. The God I seek is right there, within reach, waiting for me to simply look to him and not rely on my own frenzied efforts. Why is it easier said than done?

It's something to think about as September brings the new season of church activities and a fall schedule that leaves behind the lazy days of summer. Food for thought whenever I catch a glimpse of the phantom of the cornfield. And at this rate that may be the only food Mr. Brown provides for anybody. (Maybe he's not so dumb after all.)

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@ hotmail.com

Review/North Korea

Questions to stimulate your life of faith



After the Faith Decision . . .
All else is Stewardship
by Lorne Jackson, Guardian Books, Belleville, Canada

Richard Oostra

This book is all about a man who lived his life by biblical principles, striving to be blessed by God. Having reached a level of financial wealth he shares his insights about living a life that pleases God. I found this book basically answering questions every sincere believer may at times struggle with. Let me share with you some questions raised:

Am I serving God's kingdom or my own?

The author has a strong vision of seeing people in the market place being used as kingdom agents. Jesus, he writes, had 132 New Testament appearances, 120 of these were in the market place.

It is in the market place people must learn to apply their faith and it is here where the resources must come from to finish God's work on earth. The real test of a religious man is not what position he holds in the church, but how he handles himself in his work and finances.

Am I willing to step out of the boat?

The author clearly shares his own testimony of being led by God to sell his business and become focused on starting a stewardship partnership movement together with a National Christian Foundation. This organization is meant to help financial advisors to become stronger kingdom agents, and seeing more resources raised to do a mighty work for God in helping Christian ministries. This becomes a reality if we can help each other realize that: we are managers of God's resources;

- We are meant to experience a abundant life;
- We therefore should have our hearts fully surrendered;
- We worship God by gradually returning what we have to the Master.

Am I living in anticipation of Christ's imminent return?

Our lives are but a flash and we do not have forever to serve the Lord. We therefore should be involved in service and keep our lamps burning for in such an hour, as we know not when our time could be up or our Master could return. (Luke 12:35,36)

For this reason we must encourage each other as businessmen to operate on biblical principles and grasp a deep hold on the truth that God owns it all. That our resources, our service, talents, and time were meant to be used for extending God's kingdom and not our own. Nor should we leave this task to others or even the church. If we have not proven to be faithful with earthly wealth how can we then be blessed with eternal wealth?

Am I reflecting faith and obedience in my work?

Faith and obedience must go together. Of Abraham we read that he expressed his faith by obedience. God expects the same of us. The bible calls us as believers a kingdom of priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10) and our lives must consist of sacrificial offerings that are pleasing to the Lord.

The author not only says it but also did this, and that is what makes this such an impressive book. As being priests in God's kingdom we must realize:

- That there is no hierarchy in the service of God
- Doing the work of God is the calling of every believer
- Jesus needs us as his agents especially in the marketplace.

Am I trusting God?

Many believers will not step out for the Lord because they have never learned to practice their faith. The Christian's life is a constant test of faith by living with an open hand financially while at the same time seeing God meet all our needs.

Do we trust God for our personal needs or are we constantly storing up all we can and neglecting our God given obligations? Our security must be our knowledge that we are rich towards God and knowing that he will bless us even in our old age.

Am I experiencing God's goodness?

A life lived to the glory of God is a life filled with blessings. It is not just knowing God but experiencing his ever present help in things that are beyond our control. A good marriage, believing children, a happy old age, and besides all these our eternal blessings as well.

Faith and obedience to God places us under the lordship of Christ instead of being slaves to our old nature and to a life of fear, greed, uncertainties and worries.

Biblical integrity is not just a matter of believing the right things but a matter of doing, and having the right attitude of heart and this is what this book is all about.

North Korea: ". . .*though your footsteps were not seen*"

Elizabeth Kendall

In June 2000, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il in a historic inter-Korea summit. It was the first rapprochement between the North and South since the border closed in 1953. At that June 2000 meeting in Pyongyang, the leaders signed a landmark document committing the two states to work toward reunification by (amongst other steps) facilitating the reunions of families separated by the Korean War, improving economic cooperation and building a railway line across the heavily patrolled border.

The situation improved to the point that when the then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Pyongyang in October 2000 she was able to report: 'Kim Jong Il said I hope you'll figure out a way to send us some English teachers and if they're Korean-American, that's fine.' (Albright press briefing 26 Oct 2000: Link 1)

However, through 2002, US-North Korea relations soured and the North Korean regime retreated into a defensive posturing position, from where it has since been maintaining isolation and belligerently using the threat of nuclear weapons to ensure its survival and to extract concessions from the West.

Whilst North Korea is rated as the world's most severe abuser of religious liberty, there can be no question that, despite the souring of US-North Korea relations, North and South Korea have made significant strides towards fulfilling their historic commitment of June 2000.

* Family reunions have occurred.
* North Korea scrapped its centralised state rationing system and moved to a market economy. Public markets have been operating since 1 July 2002. Most significantly, this has enabled cross-border trade with China.
* During the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2004 Athens Olympics, North and South Korea competed as separate nations but entered the stadium together under their 'Unification Flag'. At the 2006 Asian Games they competed as a single nation, as they will do again in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.
* In May this year, two rail lines that now cross the demilitarised zone (DMZ) were given a test run. On Thursday 17 May, two trains carrying 150 passengers each – one train from each direction – crossed the border for the first time in over 50 years. A South Korean official said the test signified "re-connecting the severed bloodline of our people". A North Korean official said both nations "should not be derailed from the tracks" towards unification.
* Economic co-operation has also gone ahead with the opening of the Kaesong Industrial Park (Link 4) and the near-completion of the Christian-funded, English-language, Pyongyang University of Science and Technology.

Floods

A second inter-Korean summit scheduled for August 28-30, 2007 in Pyongyang has been postponed to October 2-4 due to the severe floods that have devastated North Korea. Associated Press quotes UN Assistant Secretary-General Margareta Wahlstrom, the deputy emergency relief coordinator, as saying (August 17): "'There are approximately 300,000 people who are homeless. About 58,000 houses (are) destroyed. We've seen over 90,000 hectares of farmland which is flooded and about 60 missing, 83 dead so far. About 10 percent of the population in the provinces in the south are affected.'

"In North Hwanghae, she said about 70 percent of arable land has been affected and 50 percent of the health clinics destroyed. According to an overview by UN relief officials in the region, more than 800 public buildings, 540 bridges, 70 sections of railway and more than 500 high voltage towers were destroyed, and more than 30 reservoirs and 450 agricultural structures were damaged. In addition, the heavy rains have ruptured river banks in more than 800 places and dikes in 10 places, the UN said."

Whilst this is not North Korea's first major catastrophe, it is the first time the regime has chosen not to hide it. Aid agencies have been surprised by the regime's new-found willingness to swiftly reveal information and seek assistance so that suffering may be relieved.

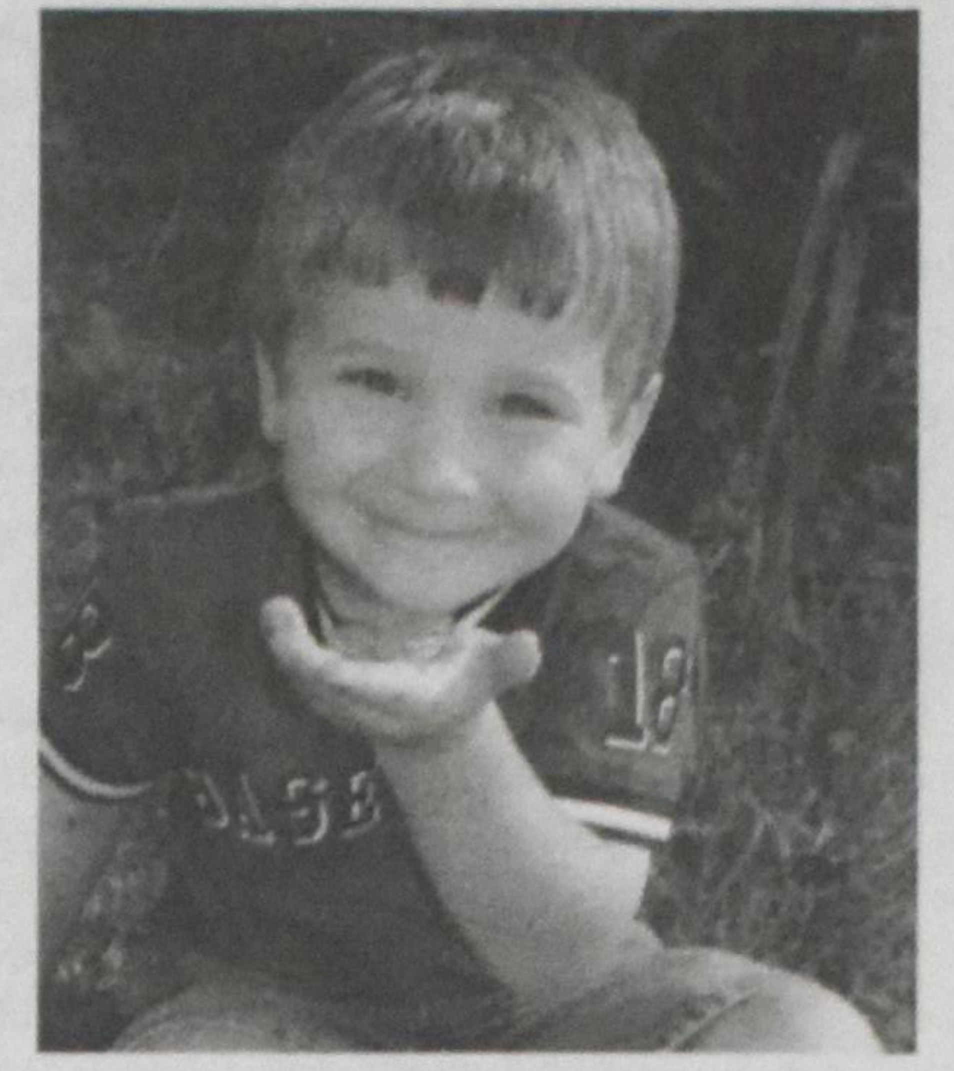
Of course sceptics would be forgiven for wondering if this response could be one of sheer political expediency. It could indicate merely that internal discontent is so palpable the regime is desperate to ensure suffering is alleviated quickly before there is a revolt! However, it could also indicate that the regime is waking up to reality, accepting the inevitable and beginning to "test the water" (so to speak) of openness.

Internet

There have been other tentative steps towards increasing openness and connection to the outside world. Koh Yoo-hwan, a professor at Dongguk University, Seoul, recently told the *Korea Times* that the Internet will be the first gateway to the outside world for North Korea when the tension on the Korean peninsula eases after the South-North summit. "Kim Jong-il has great interest in the information technology sector. Pyongyang has kept its network closed from the outside because it was concerned about the Web's possible influence on its regime. But if it wants to come out to the international society, it is inevitable to utilise the Internet, first of all.")

Koh told the *Korea Times* that there already are broadband networks set up in North Korea and that Kim Jong-il has already established and opened a computer technology centre.

Nurturing giving children



My first car was a 1969 Pontiac Lemans, driven by a little old lady who parked it in a garage, and never drove over 35. It was in mint condition with very few miles on it and proved to be a good, dependable, classic car. After the first year, I traded it for a "had to have" 1975 Audi Fox complete with sunroof and a stereo with cassette player (state of the art back then) and four speakers…and a huge repair bill every 3,000 miles. Something was always going wrong with that car. I wish I had my '69 Lemans even today.

I've had conflict most of my life between what I think I want and what I really need. Most people have times when there was a conflict between what we want and what we really need. That conflict "suddenly" seems to appear in our children as well. As believers we see the same issues of balance between God giving us what we want and God blessing us with what we need.

The story is told of Jesus and the disciples attending a wedding. The party had been going for a while when something tragic happened. They ran out of wine. That may seem funny to us, but it was serious business to the host of the party. It was a cultural "no-no"; a huge embarrassment to run out of food or wine. Jesus takes some big barrels of water and turns them into the best wine the people had that night. The people were surprised, saying, normally people put the best wine out first and save the cheap wine for the later part of the party. The Bible says that was the very first miracle Jesus ever did. As culturally important as weddings were in those days, it still sounds like God met a want, rather than a need.

So, it is very clear that God is not trying to keep us from having what we want or from having fun in life. God is not opposed to blessing us with things we want, but may not even need. But if we study the whole Bible, God seems far more interested in helping fulfill our needs than he does in giving us everything we want. In fact, God never promises to provide our whole want list, yet he does promise to meet all our needs. (Philippians 4:19)

The problem from a Biblical perspective is that we have a messed up system of determining need verses want. That thing inside us that chooses good over evil, better or best, need verses wants, is broken. Adam and Eve entered a perfect world. They could have anything they "wanted" except for one tree and that's the tree they chose to eat from. That sin of rebellion brought about the world in which we live where there are actually things that are harmful for us, yet, because we are messed up with the world, we often want most the things that are not the best for us and we certainly have a hard time determining the difference between a need and a want.

In an eternal sense at least an actual need goes beyond just enjoyment for today or even just for me. For something to fall into the category of need, according to the Bible, it would need to provide some lasting value to society or at least to my own character. We can even ask ourselves, does this "thing" benefit someone more than just me? Does it add value to someone's life or to my own character? For a thing to be a true need in this context it almost becomes something that money cannot buy.

It is understandable why it is difficult to raise children who understand the difference between a need and a want and are generous people when their parents struggle with the same issues.

It is not my intent at all to advocate that parents do not give their children some of the things they want. That wouldn't even be the God way of doing things. We can give our children stuff they want and be okay with God. I do think it is important that all parents consider their system of meeting needs verses wants. Which gets more attention in the home? Does having the latest technology in a TV take a bigger role than teaching children to be good citizens and to generously love others? If so, I'm not sure that's a good plan for parenting. Sometimes we set children up for success or failure in life by how we treat them in this whole area of providing for their needs and their wants.

As a parent, we are the primary molder of our children's chooser of things in life.

Their desires in life will be greatly shaped by the life they live in our home. I heard a statistic recently that children today get 90 per cent of everything they want in life. That doesn't seem like the statistic for most of the adult want list. Somewhere children are going to face a stark reality crash as they reach adulthood. We have all heard the Hollywood stories of children of privilege who got everything they wanted in life, but who cannot seem to stay out of trouble. They have no real sense of direction; no set of values to guide them, because they got everything they wanted in life, but nothing that they really needed!

As parents who want to raise generous children we may have to model simple living sometimes for our children. IT IS OKAY TO SAY NO TO YOUR CHILD OR TO SAY WAIT! In fact, that may sometimes be the exact thing we need to say. (Children are not going to necessarily like this article. Some parents may not either, but the job of the parent is to parent them; not just for today, but for the days ahead.)

At Christmas time, birthdays, and other special occasions we ask children what they "want". There is nothing wrong with that, but we already know what they need. We don't have to ask them if they need to be honest people. We don't have to ask them if they need to have character, love others or be generous. We know they need those things.

We need to ask ourselves if we are spending as much time and energy helping them get what they need as we are trying to buy them what they want. Providing wants is more fun sometimes, but we must be willing to sacrifice in order to give them what they need.

I think we teach our children to value the need more than the want by first modeling it for them. We cannot ask children to do something we are not willing to do ourselves. Children are smarter than that. Today's generation is far more interested in truth and integrity than earlier generations. This generation despises hypocrisy. If children see parents saying one thing and doing another, they will reject that as being truth. We need to model and teach our children the proper concepts concerning money; ultimately that we are to be responsible with what God has allowed us to have.

Children need to know that the universe does not revolve around them. Our world as their parents may revolve around them, but the rest of the world thinks otherwise. Children need to have created times in their life where they have to wait for something they want. Every trip to the mall should not produce a new toy. Instead of teaching our children that they should always receive something, we need to teach children how to be generous, giving people. Again, we do this by first being generous parents; not to them, but to others. Children need to see their parents giving sacrificially of their time and resources.

If children are encouraged by example to have a love of money…a love of stuff… chances are they will never have enough possessions in this world to be satisfied. Plant within them a love of God, a love of people and a love of life they will want to bless others; and the joy of their life will be much greater.

Perhaps the greatest thing a parent can do to help children succeed in life is to help them desire the things of God more than the things of this world. That is God's heart for us as his children and it is the heart he desires for us to pass on to the children he's placed in our homes.

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North Korea . . . *continued from p. 12*

As noted by the *Korea Times*: " '.kp' has been allocated as North Korea's country code domain. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) clarifies: "At the present time there is no delegated operator for the .KP domain, but ICANN has received a request to delegate the domain. This request was discussed by the ICANN Board at its meeting on August 14, 2007 . . . . The minutes will be published shortly."

As Professor Koh told the *Korea Times*, "Using of the domain suffix indicates that North Korea is now ready to jump into the ocean of information and it wants to prepare for the change. The opening can only be possible when the political climate gets warmer in the Korean peninsula. If the North Korea-US relations improve, reforms and opening will follow."

Second inter-Korea summit: October 2-4

The October 2-4 inter-Korea summit in Pyongyang is hugely important. South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun will travel to Pyongyang through a reconnected cross-border road. Reunification could and probably needs to take a long, long time. However if trust and confidence can be built – confidence that South Korea will not be swamped with destitute refugees and confidence for Kim that his position is secure – then openness and liberty need not be so far away. (Democracy, with its emphasis on equality, rule-of-law, separation of powers and such principles, has its roots in biblical Christianity; it grew out of the Reformation and is a fruit of Biblical truth. Religious liberty needs to come before democracy so that the foundations for democracy can be established.)

North Korea is presently the world's worst abuser of religious liberty, with extreme repression and Christian suffering. But the people of God have a lot of "handles" to take hold of in prayer for North Korea. This should not surprise us and we should not be too discouraged. Over the past 54 years the predominantly local (Korean) chorus of prayer for North Korea has grown into a global symphony. Why should we not expect great things from God?

Your path led through the sea,
your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.
Psalm 77:19 (NIV)

Elizabeth Kendal
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Truth seeks beauty

Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.

The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

Ecclesiastes 12:9,10

A. A. van Ruler

Is the Preacher talking about himself in these verses? Or did one of his disciples add a postscript to tell us something about the significance and value of his master? Either strikes me as possible.

The first thing that is said is that the Preacher was wise. This tells us that he belonged to the class of wise men, the writers of the so-called chokma or wisdom literature. But it also implies that he was also wise generally speaking: he was a truly wise person and a genuinely wise thinker. He knew something of life. He had a pretty clear view of things.

But the Preacher's perspective was quite critical. Sometimes we were inclined to describe it as a form of pessimism. The beginning and end of his book and so also the beginning and end of wisdom is the insight that all of life is meaningless and all our toil a chasing after wind. Don't let yourself be blinded by the beautiful appearance of human successes, no matter how tremendous, he warns. You must see through them and see the full reality. When you take everything together, what is left? A collection of puzzles and enigmas relating to God's creation.

This, then, is true wisdom: to be aware of the puzzling nature of things. It's definitely not knowing the answer to all questions and being able to provide solutions to all problems. True wisdom includes above all that we respect the unfathomableness of many things. For this belongs to their deepest essence. Only then do we begin to know things well. This sort of wisdom is therefore true wisdom.

This is a Greek Orthodox icon of Christ as Holy Wisdom. But the inscription on the bottom reads "Holy Silence". Icons sometimes portray wisdom as feminine (Sophia) and sometimes as masculine. This one seems a blend. His robes are bright red, the color that represents the incarnation and grace. The diamond on Christ's breast is surrounded by seven jewels, seven being the number of perfection and the number of gifts of the Holy Spirit.

That wisdom should end in silence – does it mean that in the end words fail us? Wisdom, if not depicted in the Old Testament as a Person in the Trinitarian sense, is certainly personified and identified very closely with God. In Hebrew and Greek, the Biblical languages, Wisdom is feminine. Therefore Divine Wisdom is "she". See, for example, Proverbs 8 and the beginning of the following chapter. Christians understood these Old Testament references to Wisdom as foreshadowing Christ. The Gospels tell of Jesus Christ in words that are often reminiscent of Holy Wisdom, and St. Paul more than once calls Christ the Wisdom of God. This icon accordingly portrays Christ as Wisdom incarnate.

– From Elizabeth T. Knuth's home page

But there's more. The Preacher was not just wise, he also imparted knowledge to the people. He wasn't a proud man, who withdrew into his personal wisdom. He did not isolate himself from the rest just because he saw the meaninglessness of their lives.

This is one of the dangers in all thought, in all science, and also in philosophy and theology. It makes many proud and self-inflated and they become asocial in their own unique way. This was not true of the Preacher. He kept his solidarity with all the people. Not to let them languish in their folly, but to instruct them. He wanted to bring others to the insights he had arrived at.

This is the simple and great thing that drives all good preachers, teachers and intellectual leaders. They don't give up, but they cling to the idea that in principle all people can be brought to true wisdom. The theologian is one up on the philosopher in this respect. A philosopher (at least in our days) lives in a circle of colleagues and students. But a theologian is also a pastor. He interacts with everyone. He proceeds from the standpoint that the highest and the deepest things that he deals with in his theology are accessible and meaningful for everyone, even for the simplest and the most ordinary people. Theology possesses a deeply democratic character.

To this we must add a third point. We may not therefore cheapen the matter. Nor must we make it too easy for ourselves. The Preacher investigated and reflected deeply.

This can keep us preoccupied all our lives. Again and again we need to take things in hand and examine them. New light keeps falling on reality. And we must be open on all sides for what other wise people and thinkers are saying. Throughout history the human race has reflected on the puzzles and enigmas of life in thousands of religions, philosophical and theological schools.

The wise must be open to all this wisdom and then pass it on to the ordinary folk. So we must not be too quick to complain that a sermon was too difficult or complicated. Life itself is enigmatic. And all true wisdom consists in being initiated into the enigmas of life.

This is why the Preacher produced so many sayings. It is impossible to say everything at once. Every time it has to be said in a different way. That's why a preacher can keep making sermons his whole life long. There is something inexhaustible about the enigma of existence.

So the flood of words is endless. We may even get preached at till we're dead tired of it. But that depends on us. Taken in itself, to say how strange things are when we think them through to their ground, that is to God, does take a lot of words.

However, we must be sure to give our words a certain charm and beauty, as the Preacher did. He searched to find just the right words.

That's quite remarkable, isn't it? After all, some of the things he had to say were as bitter as gall. But this, too, was part of his wisdom. He had insight into the meaninglessness of life; yet, he looked for "pleasing words" (NRSV) to express these bitter things. His was a coated pill.

That's not really contradictory. Perhaps the enigmatic and unfathomable nature of existence is part of its beauty, perhaps the heart of its beauty. It is part of the creatureliness of all existence. And the creature belongs to the Creator. Everything rests in his unfathomable good pleasure. What shines forth in the enigma of life is the glory of God.

It therefore make perfectly good sense to speak of it in pleasing words. The beauty of the words with which we express the unfathomability of life thus mirrors God's glory. The truly wise person must therefore have something of the artist.

But we must not get attached to the beauty of the form, for that would once again end up in futility. Then all we'd have left in the end is empty words. Even in preaching there is much vain word-mongering, but also in literature, film and the media. So the Preacher didn't just search for pleasing words, but also just the right words to say what is upright and true.

When it comes to beauty, it isn't just about form, but about content and truth. What we say must be genuine, true, not just sincere.

Sincerity is important, to be sure. We want a speaker to show that he stands behind his words whole-heartedly. He must not be saying things thoughtlessly, or just for pay or to ingratiate himself with the audience. His words must come from within himself. He himself must emerge in his words. We want to encounter a living person in the words we hear.

However, this is not what is meant when the text says that the Preacher searched for just the right words. Something much more powerful is meant here: he wished to speak the truth, reality as it truly is. It's not just about the authenticity of the human heart. Much more important is the authenticity of this creation made by God. How is it that things are? What is life? What is truth?

Millions are confused about these questions. They stop believing in the possibility that human beings can ever know truth or speak it. Millions more no longer concern themselves with such questions, but in doing so they betray the noblest part of their humanity.

The Preacher assumes that it is possible. We can find just the right words to find and to speak the truth. Even if they begin: Meaningless, meaningless! Everything is meaningless!

Podcasting: your favorite preacher or faith program available on the web

Gregg Taylor

There was a day when one could tune in the *Jack Benny Program* and feel reasonably certain that one was sharing the experience with most North Americans. The media offered a shared social experience that was born from both the values of a simpler time and a profound lack of viewing and listening options. That time is now a distant memory, lost in a multi-channel universe of media voices, each competing for the same share of the Lowest Common Denominator.

But this continued fragmentation of mass media has at last yielded a format that allows for truly independent creation and dissemination of original programming; the Podcast. In the process, communities that are often poorly served by conglomerate media now have an unprecedented opportunity to create shows that speak to them. Christian themed podcasts can allow spiritual messages to be spread worldwide for those eager to receive them, or for local congregations to reach out to their community in new and exciting ways.

Podcasting is the distribution of an audio file, usually in the common "mp3" format, over the internet via a subscription feed. Programs are generally available for free through one of dozens of "podcatchers", Apple's iTunes being the most ubiquitous. Most podcasts are also available for direct download for those who may balk at any sort of automatic subscription. Many also have players embedded on their web pages, allowing listeners to listen without downloading a file from a source they may not yet trust.

Evolving from the Blog, or "weblog", the Podcast derives its name from a mash-up of "broadcast" and "iPod", a name the early adopters have long since learned to regret, as it created the mistaken impression that an iPod or other mp3 player is needed to listen to the shows, while in reality, all that is necessary is a computer with audio capability.

Many early Podcasts were sporadic, often scatological and featured an alarming number of movie reviews and furious arguments over science-fiction television programs. As the form has evolved, the available programs have matured and broadened their horizons, with thousands of independent producers creating and distributing programs on a staggering variety of subjects and themes.

A quick search of Podcast Pickle, a popular podcast listing, (www.podcastpickle.com) shows over five hundred separate Christian-themed podcasts of various sizes and styles. From the ramblings of self-styled preachers to articulate expressions of faith to discussions of issues facing contemporary Christians, there are shows being created to suit every taste and to stimulate discussion among listeners around the world.

But while the shows often begin from humble origins, there is a large and enthusiastic audience for those that are well made. *The Daily Audio Bible* (www.dailyaudiobible.com), a program of audio Bible readings and discussions on related themes, boasts of over four million downloads since the program launched. Other shows play to specific niches, like the delightfully self-explanatory *Teach Kids The Bible Podcast* (www.teachkidsthebible.com).

There are a host of shows being created that offer listeners daily affirmation and prayer. The very nature of podcasting, together with the fact that the programs are free to the listener, makes hunting for new podcasts part of the fun.

One of the greatest possibilities offered by the growth of podcasting is the ability for churches to reach beyond the limitations of their four walls and Sunday mornings to play an even more regular part in the lives of their congregations. Many churches in the United States and Canada are offering some or all of their weekly services in podcast form, making those services available to more people than ever before.

A simple, low-tech audio recording of a complete service, sermons or even community announcements can help to bring services to those who are unable to leave their homes for health reasons, to a scattered rural congregation, or members of busy urban churches who may not be able to attend services as regularly as they might like. Increasing the sense of community within one's own congregation is a real possibility, as is reaching listeners across the country or the world who find and enjoy the services of a church they may never get the chance to visit in person.

Helping to make this sort of project a reality is the proliferation of affordable, reliable tools for the creation of digital sound files. One of the most popular recording and editing systems used by podcasters in creating their shows is a piece of freeware called Audacity. Freeware is, of course, just exactly what it sounds like, software that is collectively created and made available for free via internet download. Programs like Audacity and its more up-market cousins allow those with little technical background to record directly to their computers and to process the sound file as an mp3 file, ready for upload to the internet and distribution to waiting ears and minds in their communities and around the world.

While the potential of extending one's church into cyberspace is great, devoting considerable resources to such an activity, still in its infancy, would be difficult to justify. Fortunately there are a number of service providers geared towards podcast creation and distribution that take the guesswork and expense out of the proposition.

One of the best established providers is called Libsyn (www.libsyn.com). Its name derived from an amalgamation of "liberated" and "syndication", Libsyn offers just that; an easy-to-use blog-style interface with podcast feed that even a complete neophyte can navigate without difficulty, along with the means to track downloads in detail, allowing show creators to see just how effective they are. A basic level podcast account can be had for as little as five dollars a month, with no change to the cost as the number of downloads increases.

After that, attracting listeners becomes an ongoing project, and in many ways it never ends. From a bulletin in a church newsletter to finding and submitting to the dozens of podcast listings on the internet, creating a podcast can be as big or small a project as one wishes to make it.

Podcasting's great promise for the average listener is nothing less than a world of ideas, of discussion and of shared inspiration. For every discovery that delights, another will fail to connect and another will enrage, but the proliferation and sharing of ideas and of community along these new conduits can only strengthen and enlighten people of faith around the world and around the corner.

Gregg Taylor's own podcast can be found at http://www.decoderringtheater.com/

You don't need an ipod for podcasts.

A few select websites with podcasts

SermonIndex.net Classics Podcast: SermonIndex.net Classics Podcast featuring the vintage audio sermons from the past century. Featuring speakers such as Corrie Ten Boom, A.W. Tozer, Leonard Ravenhill, Vance Havner, T. Austin Sparks and many more.

The Piper Podcast: Discussing the weekly sermon of John Piper

InTouch with Charles Stanley – Daily ...The daily radio ministry of Dr. Charles Stanley and InTouch Ministries

Philosophy & Pop Culture: A Podcast on the Intersection of Philosophy and Pop Culture from Dr. David Kyle Johnson of King's College

Joel Osteen Audio Podcast (Prosperity gospel): Weekly Audio Podcast

NPR: Religion: Explore the intersection between religion and society, with stories from Morning Edition, All Things Considered and other award-winning NPR programs.

www.peterkreeft.com – Peter Kreeft, Ph.D., is a professor of philosophy at Boston College. He is a regular contributor to several Christian publications, is in wide demand as a speaker at conferences, and is the author of over 46 books including: Handbook of Christian Apologetics, Christianity for Modern Pagans, Fundamentals of the Faith. His books and lectures cover an impressive brea...

Saddleback Church: DriveTime Devotionals: Saddleback Church's ten minute Daily DriveTime Devotionals with Pastor Tom.

Sermons From Faith: Selected messages preached at the Faith Reformed Church in Midland Park, New Jersey by Pastor Scott Nichols.

PodCast 1st CRC: Your official audio Podcast of 1st CRC Denver You are viewing a feed that contains frequently updated content. When you subscribe to a feed, it is added to the Common Feed List. Updated information from the feed is automatically downloaded to your computer and can be viewed in Internet Explorer and other programs. Learn more about feeds.http://72.54.218.241/podcast/feed.xml

Listen to some audio sermons from the Redlands Christian Reformed Church – a Church that meets in Brisbane, Australia. (details...) http://www.redlandscrc.org.au/

Sermons from Calvary Associated Gospel Church, St. Catharines http://calvarychurchonline.ca/services.html

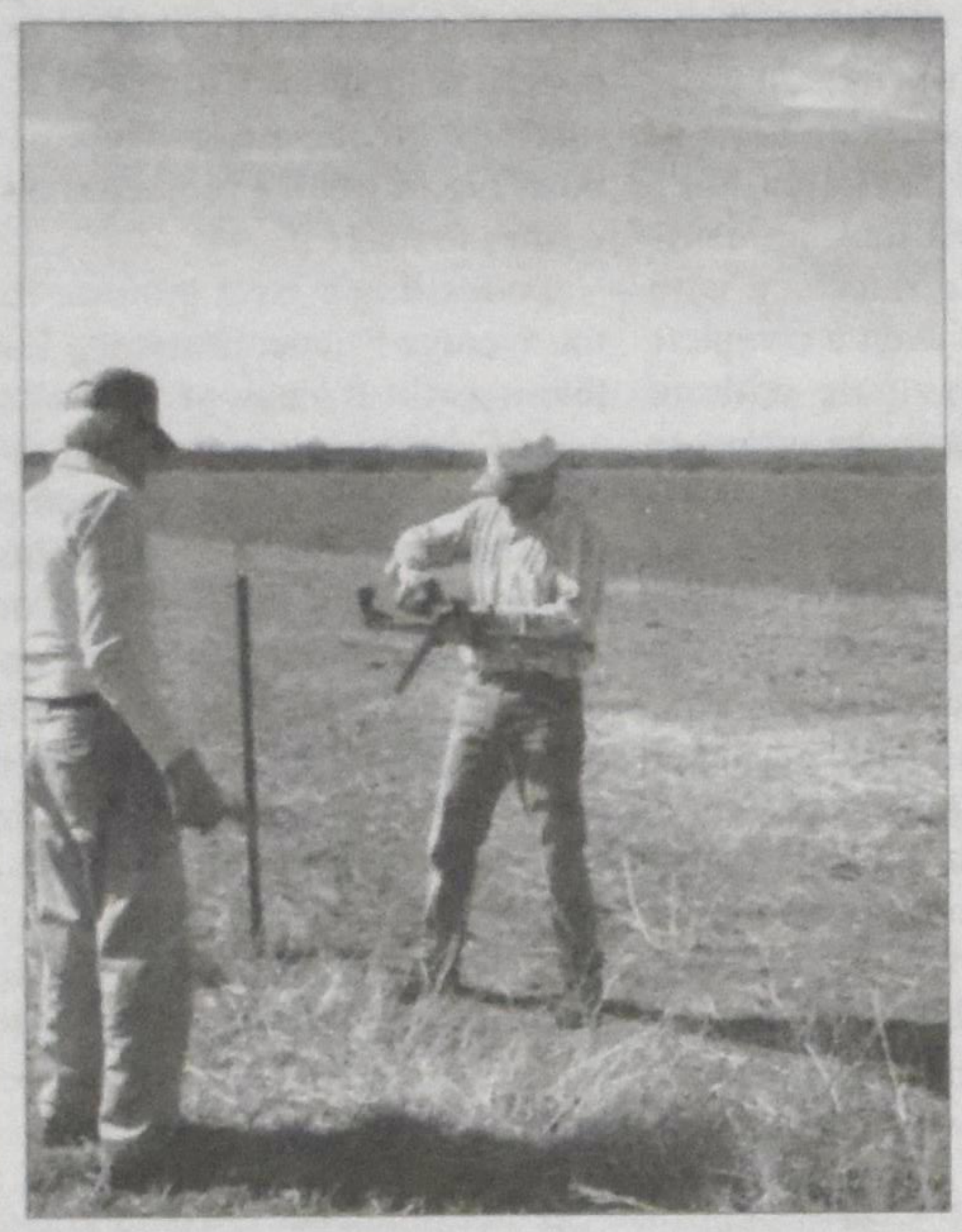
Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary podcasts http://www.netbloghost.com/mouw/?page_id=20

Calvin Sem Center for Excellence in Preaching http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/thisWeek/podcasts.php

Calvin Institute of Chrsistian worship http://www.calvin.edu/worship/podcast/archive/2006/

Country Living
M. van der Galien

The worst farm jobs



What farm jobs do farmers hate the most? Is it fixing broken machinery? Greasing up equipment? Changing the tractor's oil? Helping a cow that has trouble calving? Throwing and piling square bales on hot muggy days is no picnic! What about fencing?

Ask five farmers what job they hate the most and you'll probably get five different answers. To find out I did a survey and asked 50 full-time farmers in eastern Ontario what one farm job they disliked the most.

The two most despised jobs are picking stones and fencing. Eight farmers (seven men and one woman) said picking stones is the worst job and seven farmers (five men and two women) picked fencing as the worst job.

The third most dreaded job is forking or scraping manure. Five farmers (three men and two women) said they disliked forking manure and scraping out calf pens.

Manhandling square bales on hot days was the top disgusting job of four farmers (two men and two women). The bales are going out of style. Only horse owners still like the small 40-50 pound bales.

Teaching new-born stubborn dairy bull calves to drink was a disliked job with two farmers – both women.

Of the 50 farmers questioned, two farmers could not think of a job they disliked the most.

Other despised jobs: Working on cow's feet. Cutting corn on cold damp days with no cab on tractor. Cleaning barn cobwebs. Dealing with bankers. Working with a downer cow. Climbing tower silo. Chopping frozen corn inside silo. Removing hawthorn trees from a fence row. Cleaning the combine between the different seed varieties. Pulling milkweed. Spraying herbicides. Opening gates. Doing bookwork.

The most interesting comments came from women. They were very open and honest telling me things that both shocked and surprised me. One woman said she doesn't like holding the gate open to the barnyard when her husband goes to feed or clean out the cattle. "I can't see him and I don't know how long I have to stand by the gate," she said.

Women married to dairy farmers had complaints about how their money was spent on the dairy barn and the many "gadgets" that the husbands buy for the dairy operation. One woman said they "have all the modern things in the barn and milk house, but we live in an old house and my hardest thing is trying to get improvements done to the house."

A woman said farm wives should be treated with respect. "We're out there working just as hard as the men. We do this and that and everything. We put meals on the table. He comes in for dinner when he's ready – not when it's (the meal) ready," said one woman. Another woman expressed dissatisfaction at her life on the farm because most of the money they earn goes to pay off loans and farm equipment. A comment from a woman said her off-farm income went into the farm operation. One woman told me she had to pitch in to help out during haying season when the hired lads don't show up.

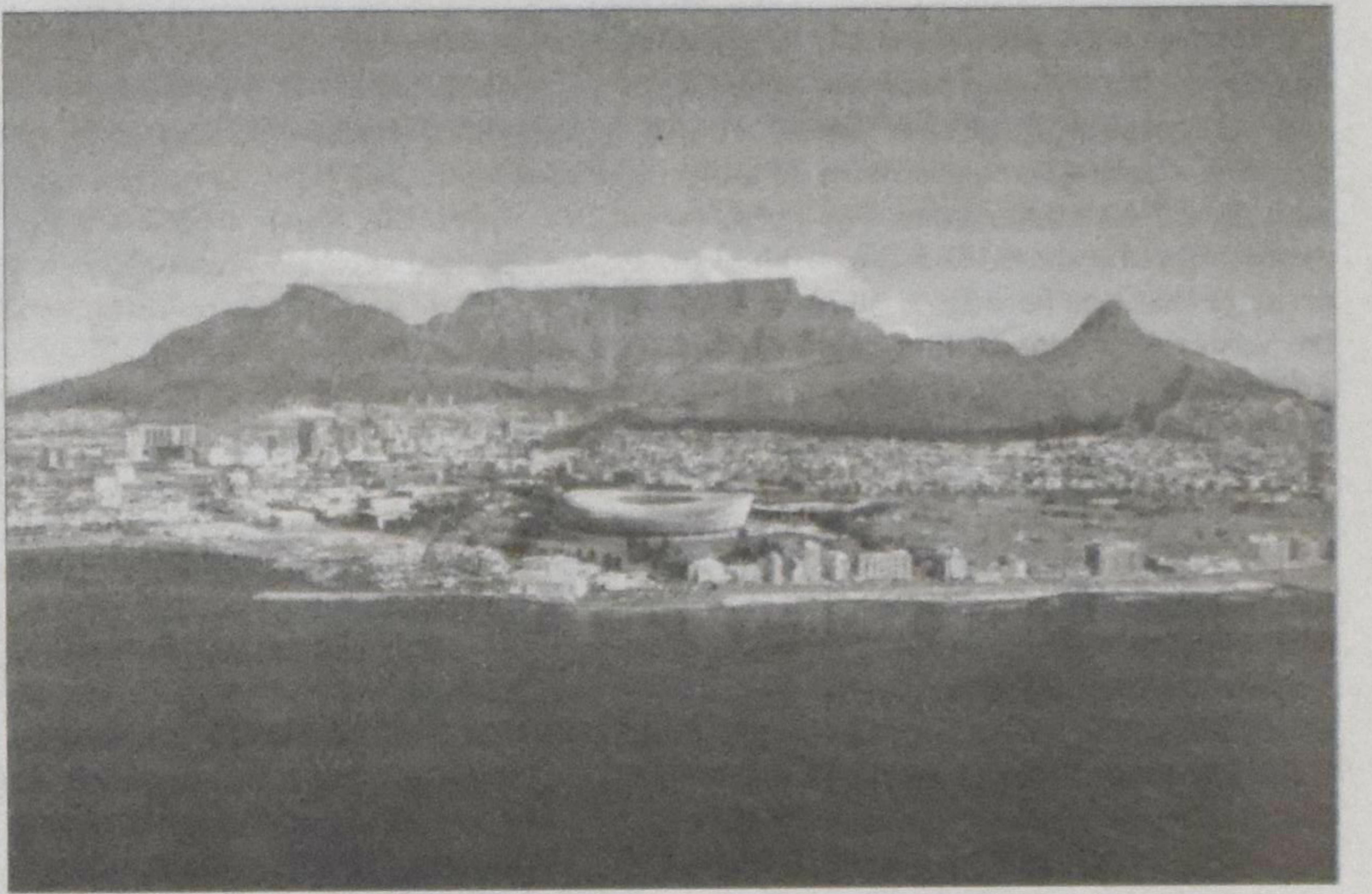
I was surprised that farmers disliked picking stones. Only one of the farmers lives in an area that has stony land. What's so bad about picking stones? I called the one woman and asked her why picking stones is her worst farm job. She told me they don't have stony land, but pick all little stones so they don't damage the combine and ruin the knife in the haybine. "It's usually hot spring weather when the crop goes in and I'm not used to the hot weather yet. We don't drive around on an all-terrain vehicle. We walk the fields. It can be pretty tiring," she said.

When I questioned the farmers I made it clear it was for a newspaper column. Only one farmer (Bob) asked that his name not be used in the column.

Okay!

Maynard van der Galien runs a beef cow-calf farm in Renfrew, Ontario. He writes weekly farm columns for local papers – for the past 19 years.

Where to now, South Africa?



As the black leaders who broke apartheid pass from the scene, the country's political direction hangs in the balance.

John Hughes

Cape Town, South Africa – Against the magnificent background of Table Mountain, workmen on Cape Town's seafront are busy building a huge new sports stadium.

It is where some of the World Cup soccer games will be played in South Africa in 2010. Teams from more than 30 nations will compete in various southern African cities over a period of six weeks. The games are expected to bring to South Africa some 200,000 soccer fans from elsewhere in Africa, and 300,000 from the rest of the world. Several thousand visiting reporters will feature South Africa on television and in newspapers and news magazines around the globe. In other cities besides Cape Town, new stadiums are being built, airports expanded, suburban railway lines constructed, and there is a general sprucing up.

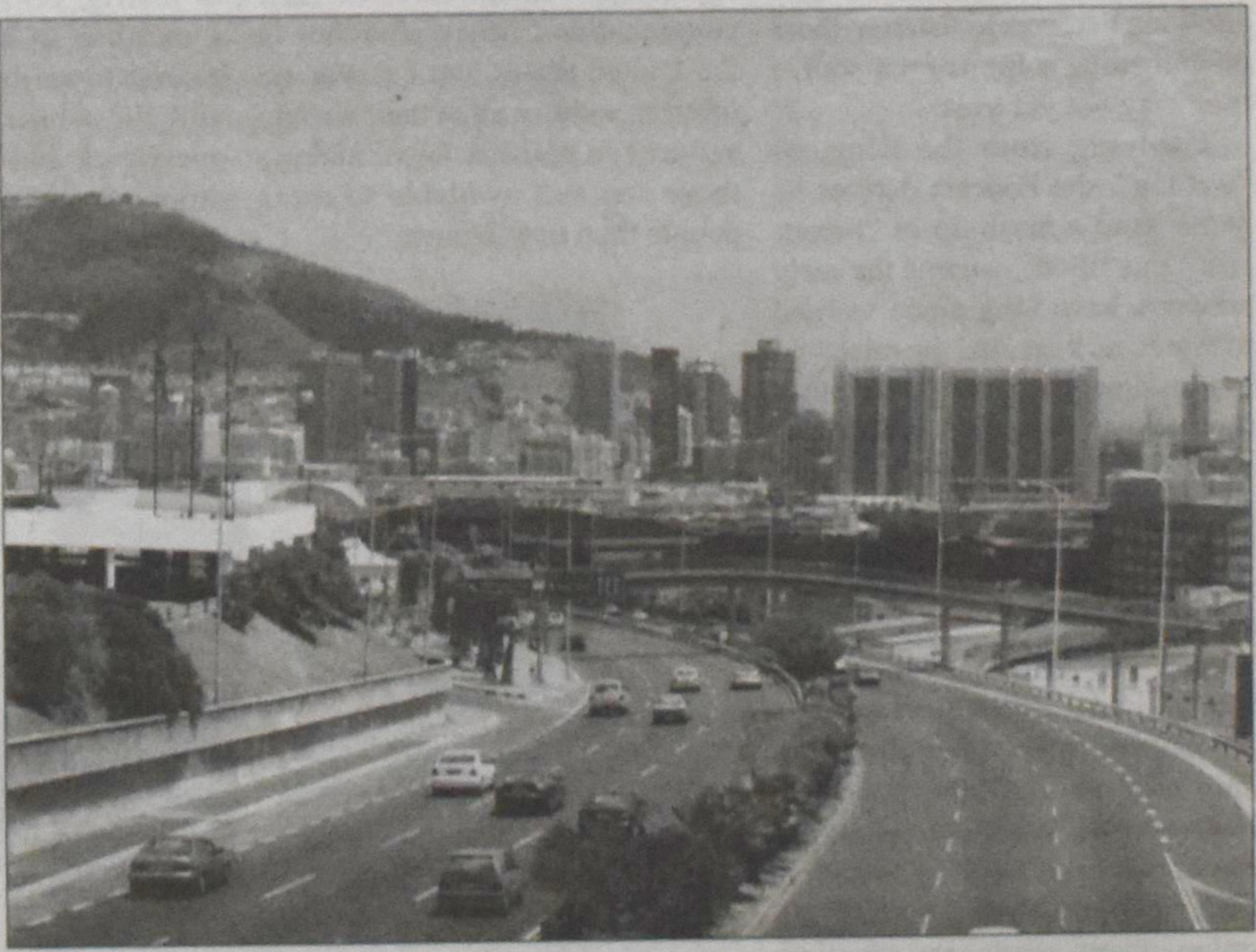
It will be a tremendous showcase and the government looks upon it, rather as China does the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, as a sort of coming-of-age opportunity for South Africa as a respectable member of the international community.

South Africa has a dramatic story to recount. After decades of ostracism for its abhorrent racial policies, it has become transformed into a truly democratic multiracial society, with clearly the most advanced economy on the African continent.

On the negative side, it has a serious problem with urban crime, which the government vows to clean up by 2010.

There is also a high incidence of AIDS.

But the critical question confronting the



Family

FUTURISTIC: 2010 and beyond – the new Senzangakhone stadium will be a world-class multi-purpose sporting facility

nation is what political direction it will take as a generation of black leaders that broke the bondage of apartheid 13 years ago passes from the scene. The leader of this group, many of whom spent years in exile, is Nelson Mandela. He was imprisoned in South Africa for 27 years, much of it on Robben Island, within view of Cape Town. He emerged without rancor to head a unity government dominated by blacks but pledged to treat blacks and whites equally. While his influence remains strong, he has become more of an elder statesman. On the occasion of his 89th birthday last month, he announced the creation of a consultative group of elder statesmen – including Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter, and four Nobel Peace Prize winners – to tackle world problems.

Under Mr. Mandela's mantel, Thabo Mbeki, who succeeded him in 1999 as president, has preserved the Mandela legacy of moderation. But Mr. Mbeki is scheduled to leave the presidency in 2009 and the question is who will succeed him and will the Mandela legacy be lasting? The African National Congress (ANC) of Mandela and Mbeki, which brought about the demise of apartheid, is wildly popular and will determine the makeup of the Parliament that convenes in Cape Town. The ANC is the dominant member of a tripartite alliance that includes the unions and the South African Communist Party, the latter favoring such traditional communist policies as nationalization of state enterprises, but having little influence.

The deputy leader of the ANC – a position which makes him a strong contender to succeed Mbeki as president of the country – is the controversial Jacob Zuma. He enjoys the support of unions and leftists whose views are in contrast to Mbeki's centrist and pro-business stance. Mr. Zuma has been in the headlines for various sexual escapades and has also been linked to cases of fraud and corruption, but was acquitted.

While the ANC has largely supported the moderation of Mandela and Mbeki, it is also steeped in its revolutionary history and association with other revolutionaries during its period of exile and harassment. Thus names such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara are honored as those of guerillas to be admired. The contributions of European countries and the United States to apartheid's demise are sometimes overlooked. Current US policy in Iraq is a prickly topic.

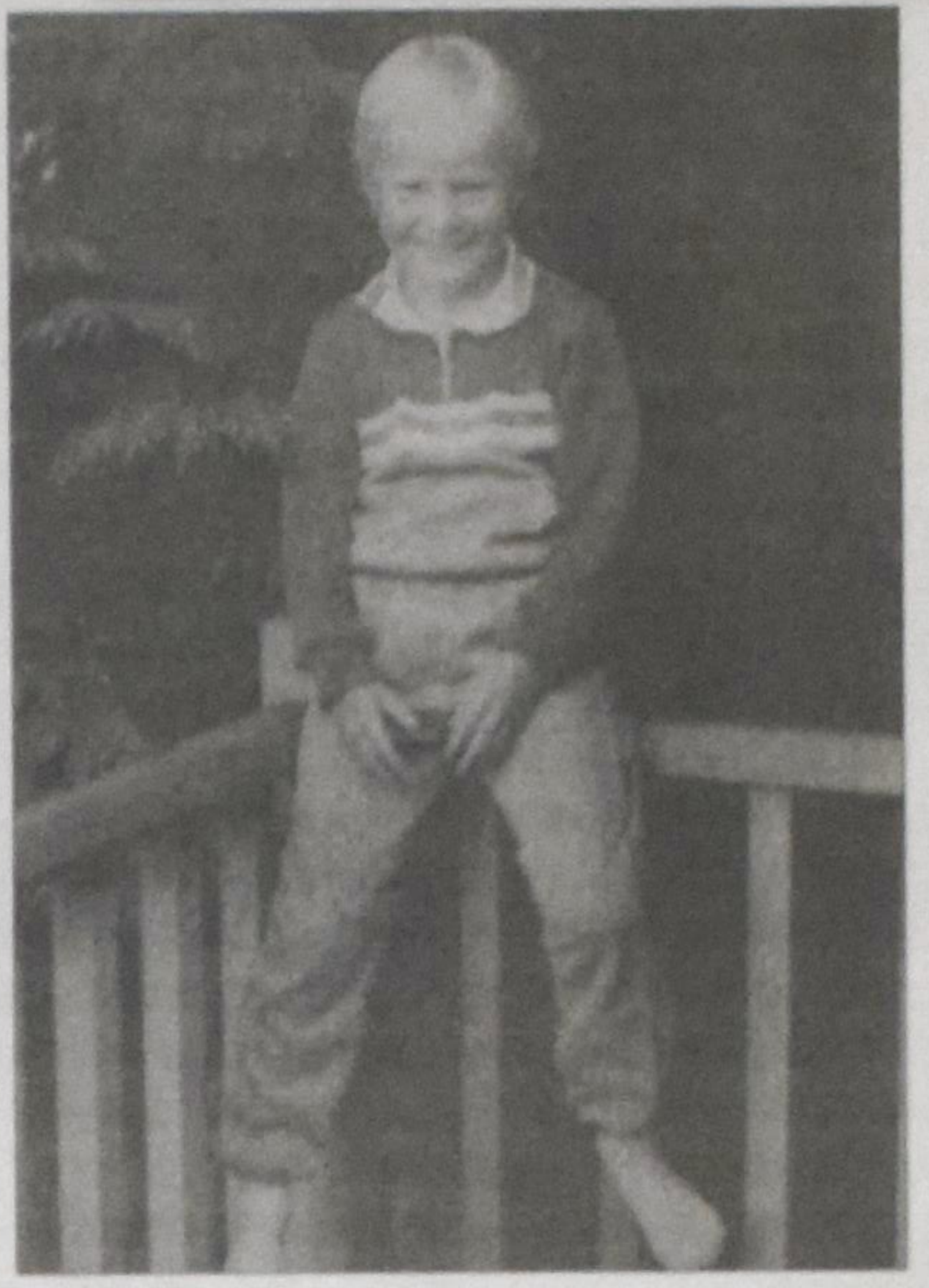
In 1580, after rounding the Cape peninsula on which Cape Town sits, Sir Francis Drake pronounced it "the fairest cape we have seen in the whole circumference of the earth." Often linked to Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro and San Francisco as one of the most beautiful cities in the world, Cape Town is also hailed as one of South Africa's most mellow, rich in history. Today, from a single viewing spot, you can visualize the past (where Mandela was imprisoned), see the present (the Parliament where a black government presides over a multi-racial populace), and ponder the future (a stadium where in 2010 a host of visitors will appraise South Africa's progress). The past and the present are well known. The future is more problematic.

• John Hughes, a former editor of the Monitor, has spent the past month in Africa.

How do we relate to our children?

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove



"I hate it," she says.

"You hate what?" I ask absentmindedly as I am putting her long blond hair in pigtails.

"My hair!" She responds.

"You hate your hair?" I ask.

"Yes!" She answers.

"You want your hair loose?" I suggest.

"No, not that!" She insists.

"What is it you want then?" I continue, hoping for clarity.

"I don't like my hair loose or in pigtails!" She says adamantly.

Confused, I step back from our 5 year-old-daughter. I cross my arms in front of me – an ingrained habit to remind myself to be patient. I look at her. She is staring at me unblinkingly. I wonder if I should go on with the conversation or change the topic. I decide to plunge further.

"What is it you do not like about your hair?" I ask carefully.

"Everything!" She continues.

"Oh," I respond, wondering quietly how many young girls would love to look like her.

"I don't like how I look!" She says as if she is reading my mind.

"You don't like how you look?" I respond somewhat disbelievingly.

"Yes!" She insists. "And I don't like how you dress me!" She continues with equal fervour.

"You don't like the way I dress you?" I parrot back confusingly.

"I don't like pink, bows or ruffles!" She insists.

"You don't?" I ask again. "No, I don't like dresses and I don't like my hair!" She finally spits out. I pause and look at her intently.

"Well then," I finally suggest, "How would you like to look?"

They say a 'picture is worth a thousand words.' And so it is with the two photos in this column. The 'before' and 'after' photo of our 5 year-old was taken within a few hours of each other and needs very little explanation – hence my short column! What is equally interesting is the above dialogue between our daughter and myself. All of which I found recently in my much treasured 'keepsake box' and our daughter so generously is allowing me to use for this column.

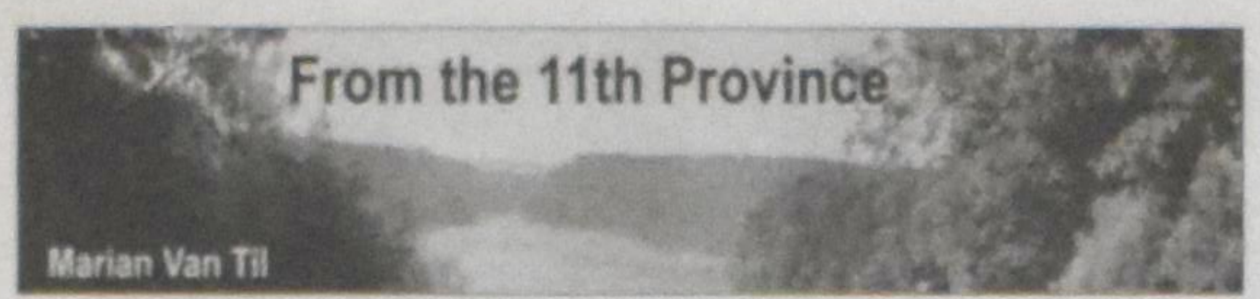
John Gottman in his book *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*, writes that through his research he found the 'heart of parenting' to be about the 'style of parenting' we adopt with our children. He discovered there are mainly four parenting styles: the disapproving parent, the dismissing parent, the laissez-faire parent and the emotion-coaching parent. Looking at the 'before' photo it is clear I could easily have dismissed, disapproved or been laissez-faire about what was troubling our daughter.

The majority of young girls in our society would feel just fine looking the way she did. Instead, I became curious about what she was trying to tell me. At that time, I was not familiar with Gottman's research but it seems to be I was instinctively using the emotion-coaching parenting style. According to Gottman this style allows the child to become more aware of who she/he is becoming, a goal especially important for Christian parents. The 'after' photo shows quite clearly the unique and emerging personality of our young but growing daughter.

A few months ago our daughter gave birth to her own daughter. I asked her recently, "What would you do if your daughter loves pink dresses with bows and ruffles?" To which she immediate replied, "I would let her go shopping with Aunt Shawna or Aunt Carmen – her sisters – both of them appreciate that kind of thing."

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca

Reflections



'Diversity is dead'

Robert Putnam is a political scientist at Harvard University. Twelve years ago he wrote an article for an academic journal, as academicians routinely do. But this one set him on the road to fame beyond academia. It was called "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." The article caused a stir. But five years later in 2000 Putnam's book-length expansion of that article redoubled the stir when it reached a mass audience. The subtitle had been changed to this telling phrase: *The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

Putnam's most recent follow-up work – about diversity – is now causing even more alarm in some circles. We'll get to that; but first let me backtrack for a moment.

"Social capital" refers to "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue,'" wrote Putnam in his book. But civic virtue needs to be embedded in a network of give-and-take social relationships, and such relationships are disappearing, he concluded. "A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital," Putnam realized. Sometimes secular scholars are a little slow on the draw. The great English Christian poet John Donne understood that four hundred years ago. "No man is an island, entire of itself," he wrote in his famous *Meditation XVII*.

Bonding and bridging

In *Bowling Alone* Putnam argued that numerous civic, social and fraternal organizations in the U.S. had undergone (and were still undergoing) massive decline, even while bowling was increasing in popularity. Bowling is essentially a solitary activity even when other people are all around. It demonstrates the epitome of "virtuous but isolated individuals" who are *not* connected to others in ways that increases "social capital."

One further point: Putnam distinguishes between "bonding capital" and "bridging capital." We *bond* with others when we socialize with people who are similar to ourselves in religion, race, ethnicity or even age and other traits. But there are many thousands, even millions, of people in our society who are not like us. So in order to live together peacefully in a society with such religious, ethnic, racial and other fundamental diversity, *bridging* also needs to take place. Bridging happens, for example, when you're the offspring of Christian Reformed Dutch immigrants and you make friends with the Hindu East Indians sitting next to you at the Blue Jays game. Because bonding capital and bridging capital strengthen each other, Putnam argues that the decline of the former leads to the decline of the latter – and consequently to increased ethnic, racial and/or religious tensions.

Bowling Alone, Take 2

Putnam's newest work carefully examines the decline of "bridging capital" and what this says about the nature of diversity. His study was massive. His conclusions are based on interviews with 30,000 people in 41 American communities. And once again those conclusions are causing consternation among his colleagues, and (it's safe to say) among those who oversee government social policy.

To quote Daniel Henninger of the *Wall Street Journal*, "Short version: People in ethnically diverse settings don't want to have much of anything to do with each other. 'Social capital' erodes. Diversity has a downside." And in Putnam's own words: "Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television."

Needless to say, those are not the results Putnam was expecting. He himself was reportedly disturbed by these ever-so-politically-incorrect and seemingly depressing findings. He rechecked his data. No mistake. With high diversity comes low trust (or high mistrust, if you will). And there was no difference in this between the responses of 90-year-olds and 30-year-olds.

'Celebrating' diversity

When I read about this latest study I was almost as interested in the caught-unawares reaction among scholars, social leaders, and in much of the media as I was by the study itself. I wasn't surprised by the study results and was slightly perplexed that anybody who "lives in the real world" would be. That's because the kind of Diversity, capital D, that has been "celebrated" since the late '60s by politicians and speech makers, many levels of government, social service agencies, television, major newspapers and even the mainline churches – in both the U.S. and in Canada – has a false ring for me.

It has from the start seemed to me an artificial construct, a lame (but usually well-meaning) effort to force us to "all just get along" (at the very least), even while elevating the very elements within each of society's diverse groups that made it difficult to live and work shoulder to shoulder in the first place. It also creates a kind of false tolerance which is tolerant only of the blurring of the lines of principle and faith. Ironically, this evangelizing for Diversity, the touting of diversity for its own sake, has occurred at the same time as the rallying for superficial "peace" of the kind that John Lennon used to sing about and other secular people blithely assume will occur some day. "Give peace a chance" indeed!

An inconvenient truth

Now here's the most interesting part of Robert Putnam's findings, and the most ignored part of the study. It turns out – surprise, surprise – that there *is* one group in America that is better than any other at successfully exemplifying diversity and happily assimilating people of diverse countries, customs, languages and religions. That group is evangelical Christians, specifically, evangelical megachurches!

Putnam writes, "In many large evangelical congregations the participants constituted the largest thoroughly integrated gatherings we have ever witnessed." The *Wall Street Journal's* Henninger calls this "an inconvenient truth" (and jokingly suggests that Putnam the Harvard-professor-defending-evangelicals should be sent a suit of body armor). Henninger cites Putnam's explanation for the large evangelical churches' ability to achieve this integrated diversity. "They do it with low entry barriers to the church and by offering lots of little groups to join inside the larger 'shared identity' of the church," he says.

There's some truth to that, but those evangelicals, and all of us biblical Christians, will recognize a far more fundamental reason for such a level of integrated diversity being possible in those churches. The reason does not lie first of all in the achievement of those specific churches and church members. It lies in the nature of the gospel itself. The Savior of the universe enables the only kind of true unity possible amidst human diversity.

With the Apostle Paul we understand that "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Col. 3: 11). When we worship before Christ's throne, whoever and whatever we were or are humanly speaking, our ethnicity, race, previous religion and practices, gender, social standing and any other human marks of diversity no longer act as our identifying marks. Though we come from "every nation, tribe and language," Christ's name, and only his name, is written on our foreheads.

Rethink your celebrations

I believe that we biblical Christians and our churches (both congregations and denominations) need to re-examine how we've appropriated the now entrenched concept of "celebrating diversity" – both the "diversity" and the "celebrating" of it. It's not wrong, of course, for us each to appreciate where we've come from ethnically, racially, socially, historically and liturgically. In fact, it's helpful. And sometimes fun. But there is no biblical precedent for singling out any of those aspects or elements of ourselves for "celebrating," particularly not in a way that flaunts those aspects or sets us above or apart from others. Only in our Savior, do we, and will we, experience a like-mindedness and utter singleness of purpose among the most diverse group of human beings ever to assemble, on this earth and on the next one:

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:
"Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb."

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:
"Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!"

(Rev. 7:9-12)

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@adelphia.net or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com*

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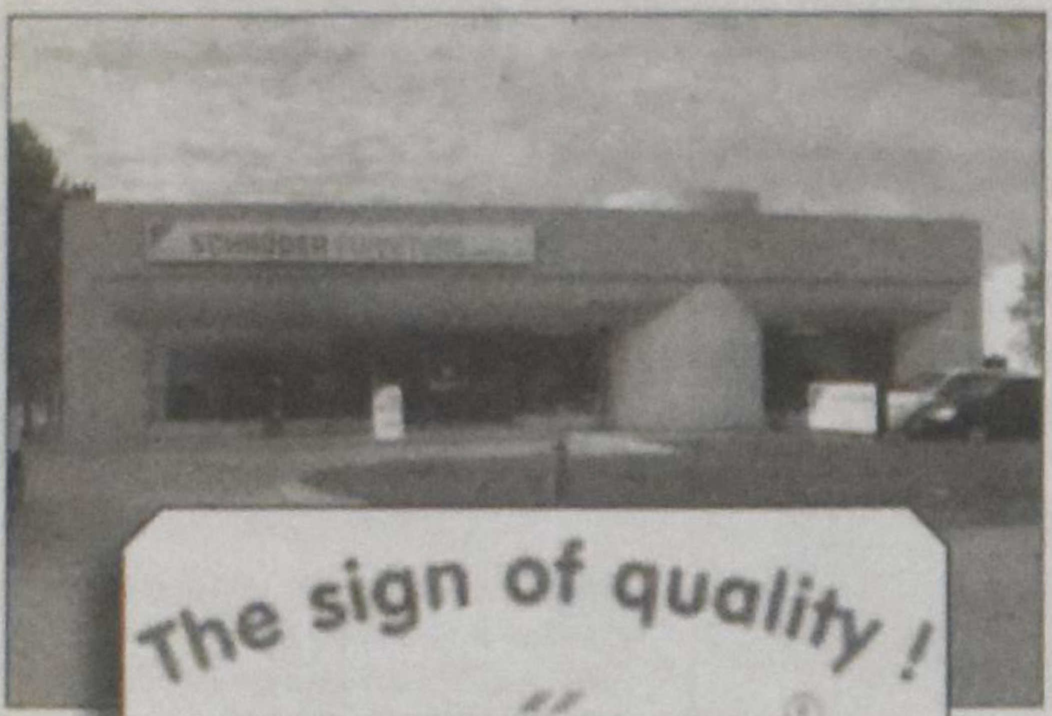

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who sent cards for our 70th Anniversary.

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Anniversaries

1962 September 8 2007

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Randall & Sonya Eikelboom, *Simcoe, ON*
Peter & Ronda Eikelboom, *Guelph, ON*
Jennifer & Kevin Drenth, *Dunnville, ON*

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1957 2007

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were married Sept 14, 1957 in Essex, Ontario and will be celebrating their **50th Wedding Anniversary.**

They have four children:
John (Karen) Spitse
Patricia (Mike) Schaafsma
Sylvia (Kirk) Drew
Gary (Sonja) Spitse
They also have 18 grandchildren.
This celebration will take place Sept. 15, 07 D.V. with a dinner and reception.

Mailing address: 288 Fairview Ave
Essex ON N8M 2V9

Anniversary

Barrie Ont. Sept. 28, 1957 — Lindsay Ont. Sept. 28, 2007

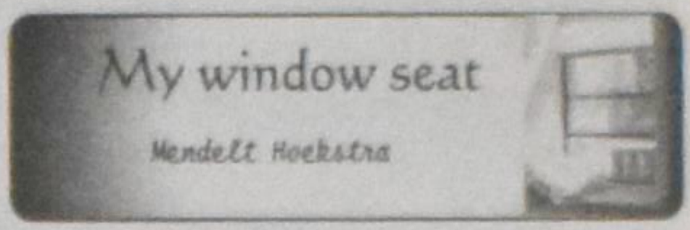
With joy and thankfulness to God
we hope to celebrate
our parents'
50th Wedding Anniversary

Jan and Sjoukje Vanderheide
nee **Koopmans**

With love from your children:
Mary Lou & Christian Papachristou, *Providenciales T.C.I.*
Alroy John & Patty Vanderheide – Joseph, *Hamilton, Ont.*

Home address: 22 Sinclair St
Lindsay ON K9V 5C9

News



Marisa Vanderveen and Mendelt Hoekstra received the results of a recent CT scan last week. The oncolonist said that because Marisa's cancer has spread and grown again, chemotherapy is no longer an option.

There is a possibility that God could provide healing through clinical trials of medications that are being tested.

We pray for Mendelt and Marisa and their family as they grieve the sadness of the cancer's progression and rely on God's love for the journey ahead.

Their blog can be found online at marisavanderveen.wordpress.com

Obituaries

Terwispel — Grimsby
September 22, 1918 — August 5, 2007

Giving thanks for the life of

Ken (Keimpe) Ellens

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty
My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord.
Psalm 84

On Sunday, August 5, 2007 at Shalom Manor, Grimsby, in his 89th year, the Lord called home our much loved father, grandfather and great-grandfather

He will be missed by his children & grandchildren
Nelly (Frank) Baarda ~ *Vineland*
Rachel, Jonathan
Jake (Ann) Ellens ~ *Brantford*
Amanda and Nathan (Carter)
Heidi and Dan
James
Scott
Marijke ✞
Ron (Carol) Ellens ~ *Virgil*
Ken (Ashley)
Benjamin

A service of remembrance and celebration of his life was held on Friday, August 10 at the Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church, Niagara Falls where he was a charter member.

We are grateful for the expressions of love and support from the many people who loved him. Although we will miss our Dad and Grandpa, we rejoice in the knowledge that he is now at home with his Saviour.

Correspondence: Nelly Baarda, 4576 Martin Rd
Beamsville ON LOR 1B1

Winsum, Groningen — St.Catharines, Ontario
1931-2007

The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever. Psalm 121:8

The Lord took unto himself a loving husband, father and opa!

Karel Reker

On August 23, 2007 in his 77th year.

Survivied by his loving wife, Grace Reker (nee Hummel)

His children: Anne & Terry Stewart, *Welland*
Ceci & Bambi Reker, *Wainfleet*
Alice Lamontagne (Phil Eager), *Welland*
Pete & Kim Reker, *Welland*
Fran & Pete Vedder, *Wainfleet*
Jackie & Dan Roorda, *Port Dover*
Karl & Tracy Reker, *Port Colborne*

His grandchildren and great-grandchildren:
Charles, Melinda Stewart
Evan & Denise Reker, Curtis & Kim Reker, Seth Reker
Ricky Lamontagne (April), Amanda Lamontagne (James);
Kadian, Kyra Lamontagne
Melissa Reker, Sarah & Shawn Annett
Tia & Nathan Clark, Colby Chambers
Ben, Laura, Emilia Vedder
Kimberly, Lindsay, Joey Roorda
Blaise, Chase Reker
Predeased by 3 grandchildren: Micheal Lamontagne, Jeniece Roorda, Jason Vedder

He will be greatly missed by many other relatives and friends

Correspondence: 317-2 White St, St. Catharines ON L2N 1Z2

Personals

Mature Christian lady, 50's, seeks correspondence with marriage-minded Christian man.
Reply to: File 2760
c/o Christian Courier
5 Joanna Drive
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Single, Christian woman in her 30's would like to correspond/meet a Christian man also in his 30's.
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A position description is available on-line at www.crcna.org. For consideration, submit a current resume and letter of interest to apply@crcna.org by **October 12, 2007.**

HOUSTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

With the upcoming retirement of **principal** Jack VandenBorn in June 2008, the board invites inquiries or applications for that position: 50% teaching - 50% administration.

Houston is forestry-based community of about 4000 people. Our students come from, mainly, four local churches: Baptist, Canadian Reformed, Christian Reformed and Pentecostal.

Please call, fax, e-mail or write Jack Vanden Born (principal).

Phone: 250-845-7736 E-mail hcschool@telus.net
FAX: 250-845-7738 Box 237, Houston, BC VOJ 1Z0

ADMINISTRATOR

Due to the upcoming retirement of our administrator, we are accepting applications for a full-time, permanent Head Administrator. The individual chosen will serve as Chief Operating Officer for the Board of Directors and will oversee all aspects of the educational program and general operations of John Knox Christian School. This position will commence August 1, 2008

John Knox Christian School, Woodstock, Ontario is an interdenominational Christian elementary school offering a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 program. Our purpose is to provide Christ-centred, quality education for children of believers to equip them for a life of praise and service to God through committed teachers, parents and supporting community.

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- in a society that partners with London District Christian Secondary School

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- demonstrates a close walk with the Lord
- envisions and challenges the school to grow spiritually and educationally
- provides strong leadership for staff and students
- communicates with and relates well to both children and adults
- displays excellent administrative skills

An information packet is available for interested applicants upon request. Also check the school's website: www.jkcs.on.ca

Interested candidates are asked to submit a letter of application, a resume (with references), a statement of faith and a statement of Philosophy of Christian Education before October 15, 2007 to:

John Knox Christian School
800 Juliana Drive, Box 243, Woodstock, ON N4S 7W8
Attn: Principal Search Committee
or email: **manus252@295.ca**

Calvin Chaplain

Calvin College is seeking a Chaplain to serve as our campus pastor and leader.

The Chaplain serves as a teacher and mentor to students and must enjoy discipling young adults into a fuller faith in Jesus Christ. In addition, the Chaplain leads a team of colleagues who coordinate various ministries to students.

The search committee is currently accepting resumes for this position. Candidates will be identified during the spring of 2008. The successful candidate would begin mid-to-late June 2008.

To learn more about this position, please visit our website: **www.calvin.edu/go/chaplain-search**

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Please see page 22 for more job opportunities.
Job ads are also posted on our website: christiancourier.ca

DUNDAS CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
invites applications for the position of

Principal

Due to the upcoming retirement of our administrator, Dundas Calvin Christian School is actively seeking applications for a full-time Principal commencing for the 2008-2009 school year. DCCS is a K-Grade 8 school in existence for over 45 years, with 200 students, and a staff of ten full-time teachers and office staff. DCCS is located in the Golden Horseshoe area of Ontario, and is supported by a strong and stable Christian community in Dundas, Flamborough, and Waterdown.

The mission of DCCS is to provide a Christ centred, quality education, develop the talents of God's children, and prepare them for Christian service. The Board of DCCS is looking for an administrator who will passionately lead the implementation of this mission.

We are seeking candidates with a sincere faith in Jesus Christ, who will use their existing Christian leadership skills to mentor staff and students. In addition, the candidate will envision and challenge the school to grow spiritually and academically, have the appropriate training and experience, and a commitment to the Reformed Christian worldview. The ideal candidate would have, or be working towards a CSPC.

An information package is available for interested applicants upon request. Interested candidates should send cover letter, resume (with references), statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to the contact information be

This is a full time position, commencing August 1, 2008.

Application deadline is November 15, 2007.

James Schenk, Search Committee Chair
Dundas Calvin Christian School
542 Ofield Road North, RR2,
Dundas, Ontario, L9H 5E2.
or email: janetschenk@aol.com

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As a liberal arts and sciences university college rooted in the Reformed tradition of Christianity, we seek candidates who are committed to teaching and pursuing scholarship from this perspective. Applicants should possess or be near completion of a Ph.D. Interested applicants should submit a *curriculum vitae*, three letters of reference, evidence of teaching quality, and a one-page or two-page statement describing their own faith commitment and how it shapes their academic work. The deadline for applications is October 30, 2007, or until the position is filled.

Direct general inquiries and applications to:

Dr. Jacob P. Ellens, Vice President, Academic
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada
jellens@redeemer.ca

Redeemer University College offers equal employment opportunities to qualified applicants. In accordance with Canadian Immigration requirements, Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be considered first for this position. The filling of this position remains subject to budgetary approval.

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Sep 28 Retirement Celebration for Co Vanderlaan (CLAC) in **Edmonton**. For more information see ad.

Oct 13,14 Immanuel Christian Ref. Church, **Simcoe**, On. 50-year anniversary. See ad below.

Oct 20 Day of Encouragement and training for deacons, elders and all other interested church members. Hamilton District Christian High School, **Ancaster**. Cost $55. Contact your deacons or www.diaconalministries.com to register. Call 905-336-2920 for more information.

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News

Eager to quell its own conflicts, African Union feels overstretched

Alexis Okeowo and Scott Baldauf

Kampala, Uganda; and Johannesburg, South Africa – When it comes to peacekeeping, Uganda has become something of an overachiever. It's the only African Union country that has contributed to an African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Somalia, authorized by the United Nations in February and extended on Monday for six months.

Now, it's sending more. With 1,500 troops already on the ground in Somalia, Uganda last week announced that it will send an additional 250 to the capital, Mogadishu. The AU mission called for 8,000 peacekeepers in total.

For Western powers, Uganda's commitment of troops to Somalia, and last week's announcement by Senegal that it will triple its commitment to the AU mission in Darfur, come at a good time. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping operations in Lebanon and Kosovo, and commitments around the globe have raised expectations that African leaders will sort out African problems with their own troops.

"If Africans have a problem, Africans must solve it," says Maj. Felix Kulayigye, a Ugandan Army spokesman.

There are certainly signs of new vitality or commitment to the notion of African peacekeeping for African conflicts. Pledges received from Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Malawi, and Senegal amount to 12,800 troops, and AU chief Alpha Konare announced last week that the expanded 26,000-man peacekeeping mission in Sudan's Darfur region, approved by the United Nations, could be met entirely by African nations. But a growing chorus of dissent, both among ordinary Ugandans and among political analysts across the continent, suggests that African peacekeeping may be stretched to its limits.

"I don't think this signals that Africa is ready to take on more commitments," says Festus Aboagye, head of training for the peace program at the Institute for Strategic Studies in Tshwane (formerly Pretoria). "This is a dereliction of duty on the part of the international community. You hear this said, that the West will provide funding and other logistical resources, and the African must provide the blood, or if you prefer, the human beings.

"That's not quite the winning combination. What makes peacekeeping work is if you have a mandate from the UN Security Council and a large number of member nations are willing to contribute troops, even when things are not going good. And that's not what we have."

Overall, African nations have contributed some 29,000 troops and civilians for peacekeeping missions, 20,000 of them for UN missions, 7,000 for Darfur, and around 1,500 troops for Somalia. These commitments have stretched many of Africa's strongest militaries to their limits. South Africa, with troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Darfur, announced early this year that it would not contribute troops to an African Union mission in Somalia. The same is true for Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. Ethiopia, while it has a large military, is also hampered from peacekeeping, as it continues to have an undisclosed number of troops in Somalia, which it invaded in late December 2006, and now faces a growing rebellion in its Somali-populated Ogaden region.

"This idea of African solutions for African problems tends to get abused by both sides," says David Monyae, professor of international relations at Witswatersrand University in Johannesburg. "Whenever the West doesn't want to get involved, it's an African solution that is needed."

That doesn't mean African peacekeeping doesn't work, Professor Monyae adds. African-led peacekeeping missions in the Ivory Coast and Burundi have shown the promise of what African countries can do, with all the sensitivities of what works in resolving conflicts in an African political context. "Africans on their own, they can do their level best," says Monyae, "but we need a little help."

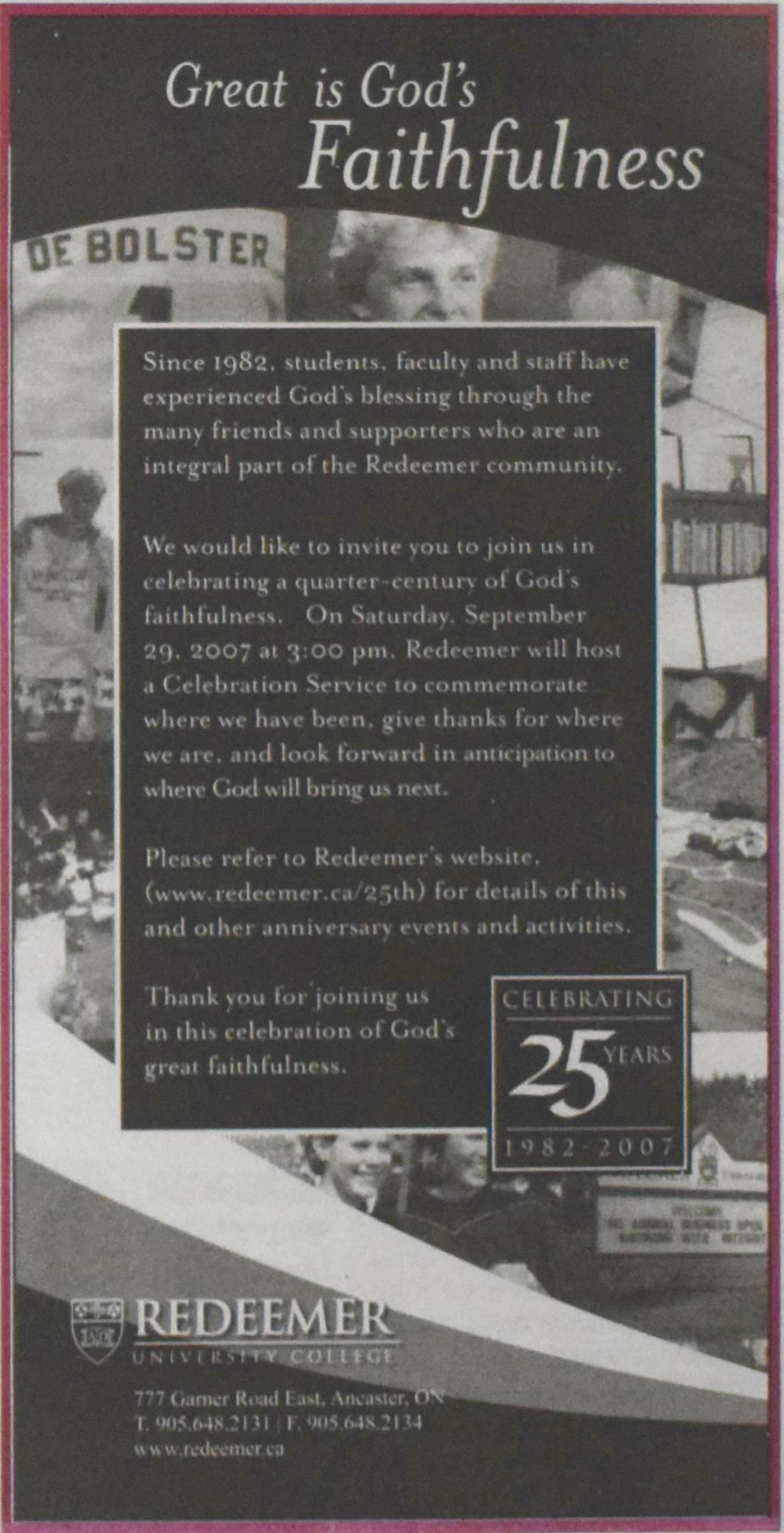
Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has said that Africans understand their conflicts better than outside forces, but in Kampala there's a growing gap between the government's statements and public opinion on peacekeeping.

"Why should we expect other people to clean up our own messes on the continent?" Major Kulayigye asks. The spokesman admits that the "only problem" of an all-African force in Darfur is a lack of funding, but says that shortfall should be overcome by the UN.

Tamale Mirundi, Mr. Museveni's press secretary, acknowledges that Ugandan opposition politicians suggest that Museveni is trying to extend his influence in the Horn of Africa through these peacekeeping missions. But he stresses that the president consulted not only parliament and cabinet members, but community leaders in his party as well about sending troops to Somalia. "It's not a one-man decision ... the president did not wake up one morning and decide Uganda should go to Somalia," says Mr. Mirundi.

Yet Ugandans are growing wary of the government's foreign interventions and the rising death toll from such missions.

Alexis Okeowo is a contributor to and ScottBaldauf is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor.



News Digest

Coffee, tea, and corn

More good news for coffee drinkers: Data from 10 different studies suggest that people who drink coffee may be reducing their risk of liver cancer. Another one suggests that older women who drink more than three cups of coffee get protection against some age-related memory decline. And that for women drinking three or more cups of coffee a day may cut the risk of colon cancer by half. Combined with exercise, drinking coffee may help ward off sun-induced skin cancer. So plug in the pot and pour yourself another cup. Make mine a double double.

But let's not leave out the tea drinkers. Studies of tea point to potential benefits such as improved mental alertness; lower blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels; reduced blood pressure; lower risk of breast, colon, lung, ovarian and prostate cancer; as well as possible protection against Type 2 diabetes and maybe even assistance with weight loss.

But to get those benefits, you have to drink a lot of green tea – 5 to 10 cups a day. That may disrupt your sleep as you keep sprinting for the bathroom.

For you beer drinkers, one study found that those who drink about 22 ounces of alcohol a week reduce their chances of getting kidney cancer. So you don't need to drink a lot to get the protection. And drinking more doesn't increase it.

Obesity has been in the news lately. A Quebec think tank (they put a lot of think into this) released a paper that traces obesity to farm protectionist policies. By protecting its milk, egg and poultry farmers from foreign competition Canada has created a regressive tax that costs families hundreds of dollars a year. This impacts poor families the most. With coke selling for half the price of milk, this nudges the poor toward buying less nutritional products, claims the think tank.

Yes, but what if Canadian farmers can no longer make a decent living and we have to import more and more of our food? And what percentage of our food prices really goes to the farmer as opposed to packagers and distributers?

Maybe the think tank has a one track mind.

The U.S. is expecting the largest corn harvest ever – up 24 percent over last year. Some of the gain in production is attributed to the new genetically modified varieties. A study in a journal that is generally kind to genetically modified crops points out that such crops have created better yields but the gains have only been gradual and they have been supported by other kinds of crop management as well: more irrigation, soil testing and balanced fertilization, conservation tillage, and integrated pest management. Since the 1990s there have been no dramatic gains through the use of genetically modified crops.

Recently, however the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns promised that new, drought-tolerant varieties of corn were in development that would boost yields in dry areas another 40 percent "not in the next lifetime but in the next few years."